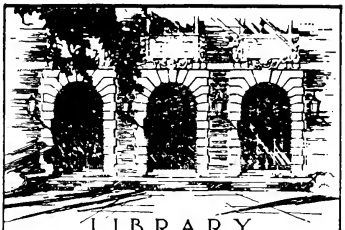

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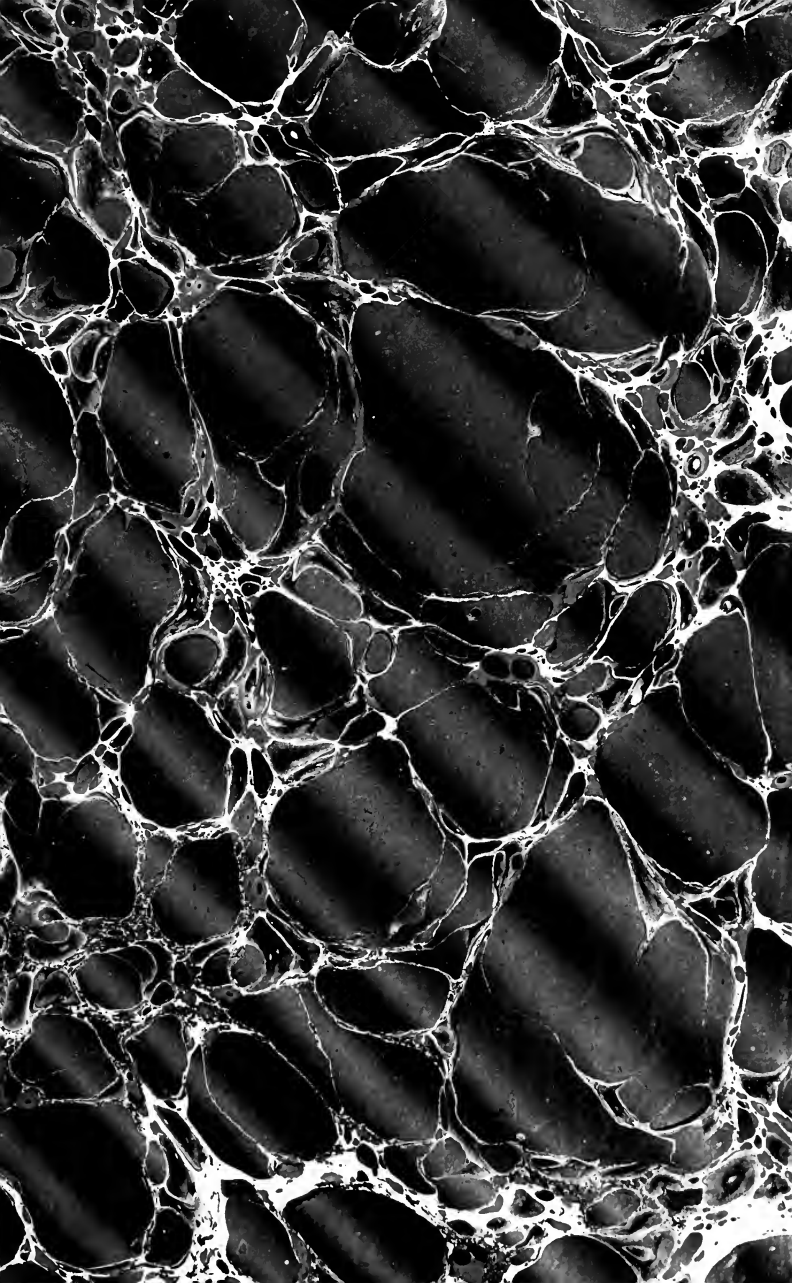

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THE

ROSE OF ASHURST.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF

"EMILIA WYNDHAM," "TWO OLD MEN'S TALES,"
"EVELYN MARSTON," &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE ROSE OF ASHURST.

INTRODUCTION.

It certainly is a very pleasant thing to find oneself the possessor of what is called an easy fortune. Yet, as most of the pleasant things of this world have usually something of the nature of a snare connected with them, it would, perhaps, be difficult to mention any one agreeable circumstance with more of hidden snares attending it than this has. So I had found it, at least.

My father, an easy-going person, inheritor of a small estate; enjoying, likewise, a moderate reversion from the fortune of my

mother, and having only one child, namely, myself—had been content to vegetate upon his possessions, without endeavouring in any way to increase or improve them. Satisfied with the persuasion that what had been enough for himself would be enough for his son.

His worldly possessions were unfortunately just upon the scale which prevents it being absolutely necessary by some means or other to increase them; though they were far too small to render their management sufficient to engage the serious attention of a conscientious man, or worthily to occupy his time and talents. A few hours' application now and then being all that was required for the government of his small domain—at least, according to the slack and somewhat languid fashion in which my father had all his life been accustomed to discharge, what he had never been taught to look upon, and never had looked upon—in the light of a duty.

I had grown up under unfavourable circum-

stances. The acknowledged heir of a moderate estate, the idea had never been entertained that I could possibly have to get my own living—that wholesome conviction which forms the ordinary stimulus to exertion among boys, was wanting.

It is astonishing how early children receive impressions of this nature, either to their profit or injury. There was not an old spoiled servant of our slackly-governed and indulgent household, that had not his part in teaching little master, that he was the heir to the estate, that he was a gentleman born and bred, and as such, had not to toil and moil like the rest of the world.

I cannot say that my father altogether countenanced such doctrines. So soon as I approached the years of adolescence, he began seriously to talk to me about my prospects, and to explain the necessity of adopting some plan by which, during his life-time, at least, I might add to the slender allowance he could, without

inconvenience, afford me, so as to secure an easy income.

For any of the laborious professions it was plain I had no turn. I had no habits of persevering industry, still less had I acquired the invaluable one of doing what I disliked because it was advisable. I had never been sent to school to learn that first of manly lessons, the obstinate nature of circumstances, and the virtue — *virtus* — the courage, spirit, skill, and perseverance required to overcome it. Living at home under the lax sway of my father, and of a tutor to the full as soft and indolent, nothing had been easier for me than to regulate the course of life much as I pleased—to struggle and to vanquish was an effort and a joy I had never known. I had almost literally only to ask and have, so that my character acquired neither tone nor vigour.

Luckily such training did not render me altogether worthless, for one or two circumstances had been favourable.

In the first place, I possessed from infancy what I may, I think, call a really intelligent and reflective mind; peculiarly alive to surrounding impressions, and drawing first, from Nature herself, and afterwards from the truth of Nature, as reflected in books, the most lively pleasure. I delighted not much in the sports of the field, for which a certain tenderness of heart many would have called morbid, did not peculiarly adapt me; but in wandering alone among her scenes, inhaling Nature—if I may use the expression—in all her forms—A child, I loved to roam alone in the garden, the shrubberies; to watch the nesting birds, the opening flowers, the bees, the butterflies, the very worms —every form of beauty, activity, or sentiment was dear to me.

The taste was not without, I may hope, a beneficial influence upon my character. There is something so benign in Nature—such an influence of love breathing through her gentler aspects—that it is impossible for any child to

consort with her as I did, without insensibly imbibing a certain sweetness and lovingness of temper, and a peaceful tenderness of heart; and her influences, I think, without affectation I may say, produced their full effect upon me.

A more kind-hearted little boy; one more ready to sympathise with the joys and woes of every sentient being, could hardly exist.

I also enjoyed another signal advantage.

The vicar of our parish, whose parsonage lay at a short distance from my father's house, was a very aged man. His curate it was that had been engaged as my tutor; but except his classical accomplishments, the said curate was but an every-day sort of young fellow—a thoroughly worthy one, and intent upon the performance of every duty, but ordinary and narrow-minded to a degree.

He was, however, the obvious man for my father to take—I will not say *choose*—for the purpose. He was accepted, simply because he was there. A clergyman, he was sure to

possess the requisite classical qualifications, and he was, moreover, a pleasing, gentleman-like person; that was all, but that was enough. But the aged vicar did not look upon things quite in the same way.

A desolated hearth of his own had made a heart most large and affectionate, seek for some object to satisfy its longings. He took a fancy to the little inquisitive boy.

I spent much time with him; learned from him all I know, and acquired from him all the good there is in me.

He was incapable of correcting the want of my character—a certain straightforward, wholesome desire to make my way in the world. Ambition was too entirely dead within his own desart heart, for him to be able to propose it as a motive to others, even in its best and purest form; he could not, therefore, correct my easy indifference to those objects which excite men to struggle and succeed in the great busy world —but another thing he could do, and he did

—He taught me the imperious nature of duty, and though, perhaps, wanting the power of inspiring me to the energetic pursuit of good, he filled me with the most salutary horror of wrong.

He also took much pains to cultivate and rectify my understanding, and to strengthen in me that love of enquiry—that thirst for information—that taste for simplicity, and that reverence for truth, which were inherent in my natural character. To him I owe almost all of such good things as I may flatter myself that I possess—for man is so formed, that the best natural gifts gradually dwindle into insignificance, or perish altogether, when not early cultivated and developed.

The good and sensible old man read with me and to me, conversed with me, reasoned with me, walked with me; sat silently watching me when engaged in any one of my numerous pursuits, with his pensive, half-melancholy, and most benignant smile. He encouraged me in everything that was just and

right, in everything that was lovely and of good report.

He sleeps now in peace. His honoured grave is in that quiet country churchyard, under the shadow of the fine hoar old church he loved so dearly, but his influences I humbly hope still remain. It was the right seed that he, the Lord's labourer, sowed. Long after he who scattered it had been withdrawn, and his holy influences taken away, did that seed prove its worth. It was sound stuff. The common course of life, and of the outer world acting upon it, has not sufficed to blight it, as has been too often the case with many a fair but more delicate grain; on the contrary, the practice of mankind seems to have nourished and strengthened it. I humbly believe and trust that the labours of the husbandman shall not have been altogether wasted.

After much more hesitation, doubt, and consideration on the part of my father, than was usual with him—he ended, as men of his

stamp commonly do, just by taking what was the easiest and most obvious course. He determined, as no profession—we both being agreed upon that point—would suit me, that I should be put into one of the public offices. He was a man of good connections; it was not difficult for him to get me nominated. Whether fit or unfit, no one at that time of day seemed much to care to enquire. My friends were influential men; I entered the Foreign Office.

I did not much like it, upon trial.

I hated coercion in any form whatsoever—I had never been used to it; and to have my hours no longer at my own absolute command, appeared to me as a form of the most grievous slavery.

Yet I submitted, and strove to be patient, though fretting against the light, but necessary restraint, as a young, untrained steed against the slightest curb. But I felt it was reasonable in my father to require this effort of submission, and that it was my duty to yield to his wishes.

So at the Foreign Office I continued some few years—which were, I must own, of considerable use in training me. There were several very agreeable, and some rather remarkable youths working there, at the time I entered. I formed friendships; saw something of the great world; escaped being a cub and an oddity; and acquired tastes and habits which have made me rather an acceptable person in society. So that when the death of my father restored me to that freedom which I eagerly seized, relinquishing the Foreign Office for ever—I did not at once bury myself in the country, as a year or two earlier I might have done. I found new wants and desires within me. I longed to see—to see for myself—to gratify, in my own way, my thirst for information, my passion for Nature, and the interest I took in observing men and manners under the most varied forms. So I became a wanderer upon the earth, something in the manner of dear Oliver Goldsmith.

Of the great world—"Society," as it is called

—I had seen just enough to be wearied of its sameness, but not to have acquired that necessity for its stimulus which appears to me so wretched a slavery.

I thought it then, as I think it still, among the most superficial and least interesting of all forms of human life. My inclinations led me to humbler regions. The state of the masses —of the multitudes—was what I loved to observe.

I liked to pursue my travels on foot. It was my delight as a pedestrian to while away my time among the green lanes and remotest villages of this lovely, dear England of ours. I ought to have gone where the saints of the earth go, to visit her smoking, mining districts—those deserts of creation wide and wild, where scarce a tree or living vegetable is to be seen—where the whole of the country is one grim, smoking furnace, like that of Sodom—but I hated such scenes. Still less could I take interest in the murky streets and among the toil-

ing, misguided, intelligent, dissatisfied population of our dense manufacturing towns. Such places were abhorrent to my taste—this was enough. To visit them seemed no especial calling of mine. A south countryman—it did not take the form of an imperative duty, and I was far below that point of moral advancement which finds a neighbour and a calling wherever a man may be wanted or of use.

These people were not neighbours of mine in the ordinary sense of the word. I had no calling their way, according to my notions; so I indulged, without the shadow of a scruple, my love for desultory wandering in rural remote places—my passion for green trees, green lanes, green pastures, hedge-row tangles, and nestling villages; and left without compunction, the smoke, and the turmoil, and the puffing steam engines, and the rattling machinery, and the blackened artisans, to those much more truly benevolent than I was.

Such had for some time been my easy man-

ner of life, when some incidents befel—such as I scarcely deserved should happen to me, but which served to awaken me from my indolent, dreamy life of self-indulgence, to a more serious view of existence, and the claims which society has upon every one of its members. An experience which has been useful to myself, I have thought may possibly prove so to others. And this has led me to attempt the relation of a very simple story of very simple people. At all events, it is well to learn to love and value our brother in the humbler walks of life—to find the same human heart beating and yearning under frieze as under velvet; and to prove the force of that universal kindred which links all mankind together.

So to my story.

CHAPTER I.

"Land-marks of life we find, bright spots starred round
The cycle of existence, which remind
Of shining shapes that crossed our path, of beams
Which shot athwart the gloom, flowers which sprang up,
Budded and bowed their heads before the sun,
And drank the dew-drops—green leaves in the crown
Of youth and hope."

JOHN WILLIAM FLETCHER.

IT was a busy scene.

The humming of children's voices, conning their lessons, was like the droning sound of a hive filled with industrious honey-bees, and it harmonised, as does that pleasant music, with the soft air, bright sun, quivering leaves, and twittering birds, of a fine May afternoon.

It was a pretty little edifice, the simple school-house, belonging to the rural village of Ashurst, from which this softened music proceeded. A small mansion, built in a picturesque style, with pointed gables, casement windows, and a pretty rustic porch, over which grew a somewhat straggling wild brier and honeysuckle. Hard by stood two giant elms, with their long dropping branches hanging like some drapery over the little building; around it spread the soft turf, gently descending every way. On one side it was separated by a hawthorn hedge from the public road, along which the several houses and gardens of the village lay scattered, and to which it communicated by a wicket; the rest of the enclosure was surrounded by tall thick hedges full of wild roses and white thorns, which were all tangled over with traveller's joy, their banks being enamelled with primroses and violets. Beyond this, extended the far stretching fields of a large farm.

I thought I had never seen a prettier village-

school; and, indeed, as I had strolled up it, I thought I had never seen a prettier village.

It ran, as I said, along each side of the road, but in no continuous street. It was almost embosomed in the tall elms peculiar to that part of the country, which, now in little bosquets of two or three together, now standing alone, lofty and wide-spreading in all the untouched magnificence of nature, towered as if in protection over the humble roofs and the numerous little vegetable and flower gardens which, with their trim hedges, adorned the place. The rooks were cawing and circling among these splendid trees, adding to the character of a scene which certainly pleased me mightily.

I had spent the preceding days, according to my usual fashion, wandering about the pleasant rural country in the vicinity—a country flourishing and fruitful, broken into swells and hills, the hills most often crowned with woods, and the valleys adorned by little pebbly brooks shooting clear and crystal through them. At length,

this day, after losing my way amid oak woods which seemed interminable, I had entered a handsome park, whose spreading lawns and giant trees, interspersed with those of younger growth, were adorned with groups of crouching deer, picturesque Scotch oxen, and black-nosed South Downs—exhibiting all the beautiful varieties of sun and shade, form and colour, which in such scenes enchant the eye of the artist.

The sun at that time, an hour or two past meridian, threw a bright glowing light and deepened shadow upon every object, and it was now gleaming upon the fair front of a handsome free-stone mansion, standing at a little distance. The place was evidently one of some distinction. It was surrounded by shrubberies and gardens, and glimpses of the long line of fruit walls, with the glittering glass of the houses, might be caught from time to time through the trees: over which shone the stable vane, and the pointed roof of the ancient pigeon-house. In front of the house a gently sloping lawn, green as emerald, de-

scended to a piece of water formed by one of the sparkling streams of which I have spoken. The little lake was shining like a mirror, and was peopled with innumerable water-fowl, to which the noble reeds growing on its banks afforded shelter. The animal world, indeed, in this place appeared to be in the full enjoyment of an undisturbed existence—the house was evidently at that time uninhabited, all the windows were closed, and not a human creature of any description to be seen.

I lounged indolently along, admiring the scene, and at the same time indulging, according to my too common custom, in sundry useless meditations upon the abuse of things. I thought, with no little indignation, what a pity and what a shame it was that means so ample for enjoyment, should be wasted through the negligence, or indifference, or, worse perhaps, improvidence, of the owners; then after taking a little excursion into the regions of socialism, I returned to more cheerful thoughts, and con-

soled myself with the idea, that if the owners were incapable or indifferent, many, and I among the rest, could enjoy this noble scene; so that it might be doubted, if the whole of a country were parcelled and hedged out into properties of from one to thirty acres each, whether the sum of human enjoyment and the means of human improvement would be increased; and so I satisfied myself, and indulged to the full in my share of the pleasure thus procured to the world in general. Sauntering about among the giant oaks and elms—catching a thousand delicious pictures of deer, whose branching, twittering horns were flickering in the sun—of the oxen so peacefully grazing in herds, of the sheep, the water, the sky, and so on. I wandered from place to place, until I found myself at the other side of the park, where a small gate gave entrance into fields, a footpath through which had carried me on and on, till at last it brought me to the scattered village, through which you must now think of me as strolling.

The cottages, as I have said, were scattered up and down, half hidden among the trees and hedges; they were mostly very ancient. No abominable red brick edifices were to be seen staring impudently at me, to disturb my artistical day-dream. There were little hummocks of roofs, covered with moss and house-leek, heavy-browed eaves, shading over little bright eyes of casement windows, twinkling out from under them—decrepid old porches, and doors leaning all on one side. There were, moreover, some cottages, or rather small houses, of more respectable appearance, mingled among the rest. These were chiefly in the old black and white style of building, with all manner of peaks and gables, some even with staircases and galleries outside, all and every sort, however, embosomed in that delicious *greenth* which is the despair of the artist, and the ecstacy of the poet; both of which, in a small way, I was, or fancied myself to be. I wandered on, till, mounting the road as it slightly ascended, I found myself in front

of the pretty village school, and standing still, listened to the pleasant hum, which, as I said, proceeded from this hive of industry.

Oh! how charming was that day.

What a bright, bright sun! What a soft, soft air! wooingly stealing among the leaves, and gently bending the overhanging branches of the mighty elms. How sweetly the burst of the blackbird's song came thrilling forth from the copses hard by. How pleasant was the rumble of the distant waggon; and the voice of the husbandman calling to his horses, as the heavy jingle of a drilling machine was heard from a neighbouring field.

I listened to the rural sounds with delight; but most of all, the pleasant music from the school-house charmed me. I looked at the pretty porch overhung with its garlands of wild rose and honeysuckle, and tried to peep into the little sanctuary; but I could only catch glimpses of small people within, through what, as I stood in the bright sun, was a dim twilight to my eyes.

The wicket, however, stood temptingly before me, the neat little gravel walk invited, and I soon found myself slowly advancing towards the porch.

There I stopped again, admiring the simple grace of this little piece of rustic architecture, entirely formed of peeled branches. At length I took courage, entered it, and creeping noiselessly to the door, looked in.

It was not a very large, but it was a lofty room, judiciously contrived so as to admit as much air as possible; no ceiling, but carried right up to the roof-tree. The small paned windows were placed rather high, so that the attention of the little students might not be distracted by external objects; but at the end of a projection nearly opposite to the entrance door, another door, opening to the play-ground, afforded an ample circulation of air. In short, everything seemed to have been planned and arranged with the view of securing an ample supply of fresh air—that indispensable necessity,

as concerns the health and well-being of man, woman, and child. The faces of the small multitude, as they sat in classes upon benches rising row above row half-way to the roof, showed that this judicious care had not been taken in vain.

They looked as bonny a set of fine, healthy children as ever were brought together in a well-regulated school-room, to be taught all day and learn little or nothing, as ever I saw assembled. As my eye glanced over them, I caught many a soft and downcast face, and many a roguish smile, that I would have delighted to sketch; but my attention was soon more particularly attracted by two little ones, who sat close together upon the lowest bench, with their tiny feet resting upon the floor.

The pair consisted of a boy and girl. The girl might be between five and seven, the boy, evidently younger, about four or five years old. One was a very fair, the other a somewhat dark child. Very dark was the hair of the girl, the

older child; the other, the younger, had fair flaxen hair, the curls of which, as he leant his head over his primer, half hid those great letters which were accompanied with the alluring representations of an Apple for great A, and a Bull for great B, intended to entice the infant pilgrim through the paths of learning. The little girl had hold of the other side of the book, which was spread upon the knees of both children, and she was bending over the younger one, pointing, with the most lovely little fat finger in the world, to the big letters, and rehearsing with the little boy his lesson, "A stands for Apple—see, there it is; C for Cat, look at pussy; D for Dog—Bow, wow, wow!"

And the little boy, looking and studying, and rather puzzled to know what A and Apple, and D and Dog, had to do with each other, and finding it very easy to remember the picture, and almost beyond his intellects to remember the sign. But it mattered not; his little instructress seemed indefatigable, and never lifted her head

from her task, till her class was called up, and it was time for her to say her own lesson.

And then, to my astonishment, instead of taking her place with others of her size, I saw my little friend among a group of girls twice her age, and deliberately going up to the top of the class.

Such a little neat figure as she was, too! So tidily and prettily dressed, with the pink-striped frock she wore relieved by her white pinafore, and a black riband which was tied round her waist, from which depended a little bag to hold her books. Her face was perfectly childish, with all the round chubbiness of health and innocence, and adorned with the little pug nose, the despair of anxious parents, but the beauty of childhood —lips like cherries, and little white pearls of teeth. Something, perhaps, might be left to be wished for in the contour of the lower part of the face, which was somewhat too marked and strong; but this little defect was redeemed by a forehead broad, pure, and clear, under which,

when the eyelids, usually bent downwards, were lifted up, appeared two dark brown eyes—Oh, such eyes!

Surely never did infant face possess such eyes! Large, lustrous, soft, intelligent, full of feeling, seriousness, and sense.

The simplicity, too, of every look and movement enhanced the charm of all the rest; and simplicity is far from being the usual attribute of childhood. We meet with children every day, who may not think much of themselves, because they are stupid, unobservant, and slow, and think little of anything; but genuine simplicity is rare even among young ones.

Every motion of this little girl was so direct, so straightforward, so prompt, so happy, as to be singularly pleasing; and yet, of all the remarkable things about her, this charming simplicity was the most remarkable. I was so delighted with this little thing, that my eyes were riveted upon her, and I stood there forgetting where I was, watching her, and listening to the

prompt and correct answers she gave to questions which appeared above her years, and to which the great heavy-looking girls about her replied in the most blundering and stupid manner.

When she had finished the lesson, and had received her three good marks with a little smile of comfortable satisfaction, she resumed her place, and sat down again by the side of her friend, the little boy.

And the two heads were once more bent down over the Primer, with its giant letters, and the accompanying pictures; said pictures still seeming sadly to divert the child's attention from the learning which his companion was so anxiously endeavouring to instil into him.

"Great B, you little goose—will you never learn great B?"

"B, buzz-fly," and he began to imitate the drone of a bee, the picture of which stood before him.

"Oh! you naughty little boy!" cried the

miniature instructress, laughing aloud; "B doesn't buzz."

The little fellow turned his head away and looked at the open door, through which the sun was glistening cheerfully, and the blue sky shining, whilst the sound of a thrush merrily whistling without, was to be heard.

And so he became aware of me, and bent down and whispered to his companion. I saw her urging him, as if to do something, but he seemed unwilling. At last her persuasions appeared to prove successful. He got up, crept with a noiseless step across the floor, and approaching the schoolmistress, whispered, but in a voice to be heard over the whole school, "Missis, here's a gentleman."

At that, all the bright, black, and blue, and grey, and green eyes present were directed my way, and there was a general sensation, as the French call it, among the smock frocks and pinafores.

The school-mistress, a very gentle, delicate-

looking young woman, raised her eyes from the class she was teaching, and in which business she seemed for the moment completely absorbed, and saying, "Quiet, children," in the quietest tone in the world, but still in a manner which was instantly obeyed, rose from her seat, and came to the door.

"Would you please to be wanting anything, sir?"

"Oh, no! I beg your pardon, madam—I hope I don't intrude, as the man says in the play. I was attracted by the hum of the busy bees, and ventured to approach a little nearer, and I have been fascinated by the scene—they are a nice-looking set of children."

"Pretty well," she answered, with a smile that had a pleasant little touch of *malice* in it. "They look rather rough some of them; but what would you have? They are good creatures in the main." And she kept standing, as if she expected I should take my departure; but I kept my ground.

"I see you want me to go; but I think, when you know who I am, you will let me stand here and watch your proceedings a little longer. I have a kind of a sort of a claim to the privilege, for I am third, fourth, or thirtieth cousin to Lady Vynour."

"Cousin to Lady Vynour! Oh! pray, sir, stand there as long as you please—only, if you would be so good as to keep a little out of sight I should be much obliged to you, for the presence of a stranger disturbs the children. School will be over in a quarter of an hour," added she, glancing at the round face of the clock, which, with its long dangling pendulum, was clicking against the wall, "and then, if you please, I can show you the school-room and all about."

I retreated behind the honeysuckle which overshadowed the rustic porch, from which place of concealment, half-buried, the leaves and flowers which hung around tumbling against my face in a delicious manner, I could still observe

what was going on in this small seminary of learning. It was now the turn for the youngest class to come up, and my little boy, who did not seem to be nearly so apt a scholar as the girl, came with a set of sturdy young rogues to repeat his verses.

He was a sweet, beautiful child in his way, which was different from that of his bright, energetic friend.

His features were delicate, and his light hair, which I have before spoken of, hung in thick clustering curls, but arranged with a care which showed they were the pride of some loving heart. He looked perfectly healthy, but almost too refined for a child of his age; and, young as he was, there was an expression, not to be mistaken, of more than ordinary intellect and sensibility.

The black hair of his little friend, on the contrary, was cut short round her head, and added to the spirit and ingenuity, the air of *thotigkeit*, for I can think of no other word, which pervaded her whole figure.

When it came to the little boy's turn to repeat his verses, the voice was so low, that I could not hear the words distinctly, but I observed that, like his companion, his lesson seemed to be the best said of the class, and the mistress told him to go to the top; which honour, blushing, and hesitating, he with much modesty received.

And now school was over, and the slates and the books were to be collected and put away. And my little girl was so busy, and so handy, and so tidy, that it was quite amusing to watch her. She took her own and her companion's slates, with her copy-book, and returned them to their places; and then producing a neat striped cotton bag, she deposited the books they were to carry home in it; then mounting the benches, she took down her own neat bonnet tied with dark blue ribbon, and her friend's straw hat, both of which were of a superior make and texture to those of the others. She put the little boy's hat on first, afterwards tied

and adjusted her own bonnet, and then the hands of the two friends were clasped together, and jumping down the benches with eyes bright with pleasure, and faces radiant with smiles, the little creatures passed me, and made their way down the gravelled pathway that led to the gate.

There were between twenty and thirty other children that followed, but I noticed no one of them in particular; I cared only for my two favourites, for whom I felt a foolish, unaccountable interest.

An artist's interest! A heartless artist's interest more than anything else, I fear. They reminded me so much of a picture I had seen of Gainsborough's. They were such picturesque children. The boy so beautiful, the girl so striking; brother and sister, of course, and yet not resembling each other in the least.

Curtseys and bows were bobbed as the joyous crowd hurried by, and no sooner were the sacred precincts of order and propriety passed, and the gate shut behind them, than the shout, and the

scuffle, and the leap-frog, and the mock fight, and all the noise and confusion of a set of happy, healthy children, their spirits wholesomely excited by the previous constraint, was heard.

I turned to the school-room, where the gentle mistress was slowly arranging what was left to be arranged, doing this with a certain languor, as if a good deal fatigued by the labour of the day.

"Let me help you," I said, as she was lifting up a heap of books in order to arrange them upon their proper shelves.

"Thank you—no, if you please.—I would rather not, but if you wish to look round the school-room, sir,—pray do—it will not take long. We owe it all to Lady Vynour, that is to say, we owe it to her ladyship—that the school-room is so lofty, and so wholesome, and so airy, and so well warmed in winter too. You see, sir," she went on, having arranged her books, and now looking around her with an air of satisfaction, "how well the windows are

placed for the purposes of ventilation, and the roof not ceiled, but carried as high as it can be—So light and so pleasing to the eye! If you had but seen the old school room, and had but felt how close it was,—so low, so gloomy,—such an oppressive stifling air when the children had been in it for a little time—you would understand the difference. Poor things! I don't wonder they were stupid, and heavy, and sleepy, and always making excuses for staying away from school...But all that is changed now.—I think," she went on, as, after having walked round and inspected this pretty introductory gateway to the temple of fame, we stood before it—I, lingering to revel once more in the delicious perfume of the honeysuckle, and to gaze upon the glow which a sinking sun now threw upon every object, and she, to lock the school-room door—

"I think, people are apt to forget how indispensable light and air are to children, and their exquisite enjoyment of the beautiful—taste for, I was going to say; but I do not know that

they have much *taste* for it, but they certainly have an exquisite *sense* of the beautiful,—that is, according to their ideas of what constitutes it, and that is the great matter."

I was surprised to hear the mistress of a little village school express herself in this manner; she spoke, too, with the utmost simplicity; there was not the slightest touch about her of the scholastic pedantry, too common in those of her calling. So, as she went down the path, I accompanied her, and did not leave her even when the little wicket was closed and locked behind us; and she proceeded along the causeway on the side of the road leading towards the village.

And as we walked, this was our discourse. It began with my saying—"I think you are quite right in what you say; I am very glad my thirtieth cousin, Lady Vynour, is of your way of thinking. You make no mention of Sir Horace, though; I suppose he is full of other

things, and leaves all this to my Lady ;—rather a rough diamond, Sir Horace, eh ?"

" I have only seen him once or twice in my life. He is a very handsome gentleman, though somewhat stout."

" And rough ?"

" I don't know, sir. He seemed very kind and pleasant when I saw him."

" And my Lady ?"

" Oh, my Lady ;" and her tone betrayed much feeling ; " she is—she is—an angel,—only one's ashamed to use the word angel—everybody calls everybody an angel ; but you know her, sir, yourself ?"

" I can't say that I can exactly say *that*—but don't think me an impostor upon that account, for I really am her cousin...and so she's a nice sort of woman ?"

" Sir !" and she stopped and looked at me, as if I had said something quite shocking.

Then turning away and walking on, she mut-

tered to herself—"If ever there was a perfect creature upon earth, it is she."

"She is very beautiful, I suppose?"

"No, sir, she is not at all what is usually called beautiful. Some people, I believe, think her quite plain—but they don't know her as we do—oh! they don't know her as we do."

"Is she at the Hall at present?"

"No, sir, she is in London."

CHAPTER II.

"Dear lovely bowers of innocence and ease,
Seats of my youth, when every sport could please.
. . . . The sheltered cot, the cultivated farm,
The never failing brook, the busy mill,
The decent church that topt the neighbouring hill,
The hawthorn bush, with seats beneath the shade."

GOLDSMITH.

"THERE were two remarkably interesting little children among your flock," I went on, changing the subject of conversation. "They don't seem exactly to belong to the same class as the majority of your scholars. Pray who and what are they? The little girl and boy I mean, who sat close together upon the lower bench near the door."

"Oh, sir, I know very well whom you mean."

"Who and what are they, and how came they here?"

"Why, sir, their friends are very respectable indeed, but they are not rich. They could not afford if they wished—and I doubt whether they would wish—to send them to a distant school; and there is none near better than this. They have not the means of giving their little creatures instruction at home, and they think, and I agree with them, that young children do better, employed and kept in order during a regular portion of each day, than suffered to run about, week after week, doing nothing—and that they will not be the worse in after-life for having begun in a humble village school."

"Brother and sister, of course, though not in the least like each other."

"No, sir; not in any degree related."

"They seem great friends."

"They are a perfect miniature picture of friendship, such as we read of in books. Da-

mon and Pythias, Roland and Oliver, are nothing to them—and so exactly suited to each other too !"

"The little girl seems to assume the usual privilege of her sex, and to lord it to a certain degree over the nobler gender."

"Nothing of the sort, sir. It is only the natural ascendancy of sense and activity over thought and genius—it is only apparent. Besides, you must recollect that the little girl is, in fact, two years older than the boy, which at that age counts for a score. Only think of two years' experience more or less, between four and seven ; it is two ages."

"What a charming little thing she looks, and so apt and clever."

"I never saw a young child like her. If you were only to see her with her grandmother !"

"Has she no mother, then ?"

"Neither father nor mother. She lives with her grandmother . . . ."

"Stop a moment, sir, if you please. Just look

across the clover field, there—standing in that little tuft of green trees. Do you see the black and white gables peeping from among the willows?"

"Is that the house?"

"Oh, sir! it is very small, but it is so pretty."

"And who is this grandmother, who keeps her house so neat and pretty, and brings up such a charming little grandchild? Is she a gentlewoman?"

"I don't know exactly what is meant by that. If you mean a gentlewoman born, I believe not. If you mean that she has the manners and ways of a gentlewoman, those she has, and ever will have. I have heard that her father was a tradesman, but she is a very aged person; and we fancy here—I don't know whether rightly or not—that when she was young, tradespeople were not quite looked upon in the light they are now. I believe, at least, they looked upon themselves with perfect self-respect. They admitted the difference of ranks — they never strove for, nor expected to be received,

into the society of what were called the gentry—the gentry, you know, were real gentry in those days—they were satisfied with their own condition; they dwelt among their own people. There was much simple dignity in the attitude they assumed. All this has passed away now. It is better, I suppose, and it is worse,—but so it is. I have heard my mother, who remembered those days as a child, often speak of these changes in things."

"And so the old grandmother is considered, to a certain degree, as a gentlewoman?"

"Among us in this village she is."

"You are a very happy people in my opinion, if you have contrived to preserve so much of the antique simplicity as to class people by what they *are*, rather than by what they *have*. Have you no rich millionaires among you, to make a dash, and vulgarise your taste?"

"There are Mr. Johns and Mr. Thomas, the two rich farmers, sir."

"Oh! oh! it's coming, then—beware."

"No, sir, I hope not; I should be sorry to see much of a change."

"To return to the grandmother. You see I love to dignify her with the name of grandmother; it belongs to her day. We shall hear of nobody proud of being called grandmother soon. She is a widow, I conclude. These sort of women always are widows. To a faithful woman's heart it is the deep baptism of sorrow. She comes out the better for it."

"Yes, sir, she is a widow."

"And what was her husband?"

"In the army, sir."

"An officer?"

"Only what, I believe, they call a non-commissioned officer. He was a serjeant, sir. He had got all the stripes; everything that good conduct could obtain he had got. They talked, I believe, of giving him a commission, when he fell in the ditch, in some very famous siege in India, where his regiment obtained great honour. They gave his widow a lieutenant's widow's pension,

and that she lives upon, and a little her father left her."

"What regiment? what siege?"

"I am ashamed to say, I cannot exactly tell you, sir; but if you were to ask the little girl or the little boy, they would answer you in a moment."

"And the boy—what is he?"

"This is my home. Good evening, sir."

And she stopped at a little white gate, leading into a pretty garden hedged round with hawthorn, now in flower, and sweet brier to be in flower, and took her leave abruptly. She seemed to be a discreet young woman, and perhaps thought she had been communicative enough to a perfect stranger.

So I was left in the dark as to the ancestry of the little boy.

What would I do next?

The young schoolmistress had told me that Lady Vynour was not at the Hall, and even if she had been at the Hall, I was in some doubt

whether to introduce myself or not. For thirtieth—indeed, you may read third or fourth cousin one remove — or something of that nature; yet I did not know whether she would care to make the acquaintance of an idle, vagrant, walking gentleman like myself, even though I did carry a letter of introduction to her in my pocket.

However, she was not at home, so there was an end to that scheme, and I certainly was not going to beg bed and board, even for a single night, from her servants. And yet my fancy lingered about the place. I wanted to see and hear more about Ellen—that was the name she went by in the family—and of her husband, not unknown to fame as Sir Horace Vynour,—as a brave, rough, naval officer, one of the few last remaining types of what naval officers were, or affected to be, in years gone by. Then the Hall had a certain celebrity. Perhaps, because lying in such a secluded, out-of-the-way part of the country nobody knew anything about it;

and, therefore, the reports of its old-fashioned gardens, its wild woods, its queer, ancient rooms, and so forth, were exaggerated on all sides, and contradicted upon none. Certain it is, I had, ever since I was quite a boy, longed to see Ashurst Hall.

I strolled down the road irresolute, when, as I advanced, it suddenly opened upon a small village-green, surrounded upon all sides by cottages, some few of which deserved the name of houses. Upon the turf grew two or three magnificent elms, the growth of ages, and round their hoar and gnarled trunks were benches, upon which old men were to be seen sitting enjoying the delicious evening, and also neatly-dressed young wives, who were working at their needles, with their children romping and playing, and making a most joyous noise upon the grass around them.

Exactly in front, as you entered the green, stood a lofty pole, with a projecting arm, from which hung, dangling and displaying its splen-

dour to the sun, a very handsomely-painted sign of King Charles in the oak-tree—said oak-tree being larger, and thicker, and greener than ever was oak-tree before; but, in spite of all its abundant foliage, utterly incapable of covering the figure of his most gracious Majesty, who, twice as large as life, and arrayed in the brightest scarlet and gold, displayed a most prominent figure to the eyes of the pursuing enemy.

Beneath this gorgeous sign twinkled, with a sort of pleasant humility, the two bow-windows of the unassuming, but most enticing-looking, little inn. It also was overshadowed by two other of those enormous elms, the glory of this part of the country, whose lowest branches towered too high to obscure anything but the very summit of the roof, the line of which they pleasantly broke, and mingled with the chimneys, from one of which the blue reek rose into the evening air, giving earnest of good things going on.

This little inn was surrounded by a garden

which stretched far away behind, and was apparently full of apple and pear trees, gooseberries and currants, and stored with a prodigious abundance of vegetables of all descriptions. The garden was fenced in from the road, separated by neat white railings, not one single rail of which was out of order. The fence was carried up upon each side the door to the house, leaving a pretty broad gravelled pathway by which to approach, but enclosing the bow-windows upon either side,—they opening into the little front garden. This garden was, in summer, gorgeous as an old brocade, with sunflowers, nasturtiums, larkspurs, sweet-peas, and rockets. It was now filled with less showy, but sweet and various spring flowers, and looked so flourishing, abundant, and gay, that it was extremely pretty, though not quite such a feast as in its summer dress, to an eye like mine, childish enough to prefer a great rich mass of colour to anything else to be seen in a garden.

Sterne remarks, that such accidents as befell

him never happen except to the sentimental traveller. I verily believe villages, like the one I am describing, never come in the way of any but of walking artists without art—such as I profess myself to be.

What traveller could resist such an inn? I am sure I could not. My plan was at once decided. I would call in, order my bed, and spend this glorious evening enjoying the beauties of Ashurst Hall.

So to the inn I went, and was received by a diminutive woman with the pleasantest face in the world, the brightest, briskest eyes, like those of a mouse or squirrel, and features, in short, that only wanted to be magnified to be beautiful. She was dressed with a neatness and precision that would have been perhaps rather too stiff, had not the whole been so characteristic. She ushered me into one of the bow-windowed parlours above mentioned, the possession of which I had already coveted, flung open a glass door which led by a few steps

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into the garden, and then, turning round, asked me "what I would be pleased to have?"

"A glass of porter, if they had any good, and a crust of bread for the present; and a good bed and airy room, with a roasted fowl for my supper by-and-by."

"Wouldn't I like to choose my bed?"

"I dare say all your beds are good, Mrs. ——"

"Tilley, sir—at your service. You had better see your bed, if you please. Would you like the room over this? It is vacant."

"I can't do better, as it seems to me."

"Please *just* step up, sir, and see if it is to your liking, for we have others."

I was all obedience.

And so up stairs of oak, or stained oak, it was alike to me, which were shining like a looking-glass, but at which, nevertheless, a fine stout lass was scrubbing with all her might—the slippery oak being crossed by a slip of bright crimson drugget stair-carpet—I followed my brisk

little landlady, who, having arrived at the top, flung open a door with an air of "Will you like that?"

I might well like *that.*

Such a sweet pretty room!—pretty in its simplicity, in its absence of all pretension—but such a darling of a room! The four-post bed had, of course, white curtains, but they were set off by such a neat little painted cornice of roses and blue convolvuluses! The paper was a cheap one, but of such a pretty device and colour! The floor-cloth, with its soft green foreground, strewn over with tiny brown leaves so appropriate! The window-curtains so nicely hung, and the same dainty little cornice round the bow. A beau-pot, upon a small antique chest of drawers, elaborate with brass locks and handles, and shining like gold, was full of polyanthuses and blue squills. No perfume from the flowers; but the room was perfectly redolent of lavender, and the snow-white covering of the bed had dried rose-leaves strewed over it. The

little washing-stand, the tin bath, the bit of oil-cloth, were all complete. There was everything for use and beauty united—to satisfy taste and insure comfort.

A picture of the jolliest of hosts hung over the fire-place, which was filled with a bouquet composed of green branches, lilacs, laburnums, and a fine double crimson peony as big as a man's face.

"Well, this *is* a charming room."

"I thought you would like it, sir: most gentlemen do — angling gentlemen in particular. May I make bold—are you an angler, sir?"

"I have not the honour to be a brother of the gentle craft."

"I am sorry for that—I do so like anglers."

"But I am a gentleman walking in search of the picturesque: will not that do as well?"

"Oh, sir! to be sure. I beg pardon."

"And who may that be, hanging over the chimney-piece?" I said, after having duly examined and admired my room.

"That is my husband, sir."

"Your husband! Why, it is Garagantua married to Queen Mab."

She looked as if she did not know whether to be half offended or not.

"He is the best of husbands, sir, to me."

"I doubt it not—I doubt it not: he must be a very different man from what he looks—a very different man from every other man in the world, *I* think, if he were not."

She coloured a little, and turned to lead down stairs again, saying,—

"I don't pretend to know much about what other men may be; but I know Mr. Tilley is as genuine an article as ever came into the market."

Having settled these matters to my satisfaction, the next thing was, how to dispose of myself for the remainder of the day.

I had a great wish to visit the Hall. I had heard so much of Ellen and her husband in the course of family gossip, that I longed to see

what sort of a place they inhabited; so I turned to Mrs. Tilley, and asked whether the Hall and its gardens were allowed to be seen when the family was away.

"Not usually," she said; "but if she gave me a line to Job, the gardener, he would show them to me."

"Is he authorised so to do?" I asked; for I have very determined ideas as to tampering with the consciences of servants, who appear to me to live in the very element of temptation.

"Yes," she answered; "Job has leave to show the place to people properly recommended. Catch Job shewing a yard of it if he had not."

She gave me the necessary credentials, and off I went.

I turned at right angles from the inn, as Mrs. Tilley directed me to do, and soon found myself in one of those deep lanes which are especial favourites of mine.

The banks rose high upon either side, covered with mossy grass and innumerable wild flowers

—a perfect tapestry it was of violets and wild strawberries, which peeped out and raised their elegant spires of bloom and bud, with the crimson berries, many of them now ripe, intermingled.

A clear coursing stream ran down the side of the road—its edges, perfectly blue with the marsh forget-me-not—that queen of the tribe to be found in some damp places, were a perfect garden of azure flowers.

This lane gently descended towards the plain below, where the Hall was situated ; and beneath the overshooting branches of oak and elm arching over-head, glimpses of this rich plain thus beautifully framed might be seen.

I was in a perfect rapture of delight, and was about to take out my materials and attempt a despairing sketch, when, creeping about among the grass and flowers of the high banks, and busily engaged searching for strawberries, I discerned my two little children.

The girl had her straw bonnet off, and her

dark, round head, and her ripe, brown face, were exposed to the sun. The bonnet was neatly lined with fresh green leaves, and already half filled with strawberries, which,—as I watched them unobserved behind a bush of eglantine—indeed, they were too busy to notice me,—were carefully gathered and deposited in this primitive basket, not one single strawberry finding its way to either little mouth.

The two looked so pretty! Like the babes in the wood, nestling upon their knees, so busily engaged. Two little cherub faces—two pair of little, chubby, innocent hands, mingling with the white, and blue, and yellow flowers, and the soft green mosses with which the bank was embroidered. The little boy, I found, carried a small box in his pocket, which he every now and then produced; and the ribbon of his hat was all garlanded round with different sorts of grasses in flower.

"Oh, oh!" I heard him cry; "come here, Amy; here's a hole, and I saw a bee go in. It

had a bit of scarlet poppy-leaf in its bill—Oh, if it *should* be a tapestry bee!"

"Its bill! foolish boy;" and she laughed heartily. "Bees haven't bills like birds."

"They have something very like bills," answered the little one, with the gravity of a young professor. "You may call them mouths if you please—bills are mouths—But a bee's bill and a goatsucker's bill are as like as can be, only one is little and the other big."

"Goatsucker! What's a goatsucker?"

"Don't you know a goatsucker?—why, the bird that spins in the evening—Did you never see one?"

"Bird that spins, silly boy! why, what are you talking of?—Bird that spins! I never heard of such a thing."

"I didn't mean spins a thread; but makes noises like a spinning-wheel. It's a very pretty noise, and mamma told me it was a bird; and I once saw the bird fly away—It was like a hawk. But papa showed me its bill, gaping

wide like a bee's bill, and said it was not a proper hawk, and no more it was.—Ah! there goes another bee into the hole. *Do* let us poke it."

"You would be stung, foolish boy; you are always thinking about bees and things. You'd better mind your business, and get strawberries."

"Bees and things are so curious," said the little man.

"But strawberries are so good, and grandmamma loves them so—and if you will be industrious, there will be enough for your mamma too."

The little boy cast a wistful glance towards the tuft of branching green and golden moss where the bee had made its hole, but, obedient to his companion's voice, he again set himself to gather strawberries, though from time to time I could observe his eyes turning to the place."

"Ah! there's another," at last he cried, "and another bit of poppy-leaf in its bill——"

"Mouth."

"I choose to call it bill," said the young naturalist.—I found that here he considered himself in his own province, and was not to be guided.—"I'd give strawberries," extending his little arms, "and all I had in the world, to see the home of a tapestry bee."

"And all the mammas, and papas, and grandmammas in the world, if you could, I s'pose," added the little girl.

"No, not mamma and papa, but my box, and my picture-book, and all I ever had in the world. A tapestry bee! — mamma told me about them last Sunday; all their house hung with red curtains, she said, made of poppy-leaves—so beautiful."

"Come away, now, pray do, for Job won't be pleased if we are late; and he promised us twenty hobgoblin strawberries if we brought a pint of wild ones; and we've more than that."

Hand in hand down the lane they went, and I issued from my hiding-place.

"Oh! here is the gentleman," cried the little boy, "I do believe it's the same."

"Hush! stand out of the gentleman's way," said the little girl in a half whisper; and the two wee things ranged themselves upon one side, to let me pass. They looked more than ever like a group for a Gainsborough, standing hand in hand, the little girl with her eyes modestly bent to the ground, the boy with his great blue ones staring full at me.

I stopped. "And what are your names, little children?" I said.

"He's Fabian Lewis, if you please," said the little girl, answering for both, but still keeping her eyes bent modestly downwards, and dropping a little curtsey as she spoke, "and I'm Amy Grant."

"And where do you live?"

"At Ashurst, if you please."

"Oh, yes; I saw your grandmamma's, Mrs. Grant's, house to-day, as I came down the village. Amy, you live with her?"

"Yes," said the boy, pushing forward, "she lives with her, because her father was a sergeant in the glorious 76th, and he died in the great siege of G——"

"What do you know about sieges? What is a siege, my young man?"

"I don't know—but Amy's father was a sergeant in the glorious 76th, and he died at the great siege of G——" he repeated, with his face all in a glow; whilst on hers, which was bent down upon her bosom, the colour rose almost to the temples.

"You have reason to be proud," I said, laying my hand upon the dark head.

She made no answer, but by a glance full in my face, with her large dark eyes, which spoke volumes, and an expression in them which astonished me in so young a child; then the eyelids fell again, and she remained looking quiet and modest as before.

I was quite affected.

"And who are you, my little man?" I asked,

"who feel so warmly for the glory of your friend, Amy's father? Who are you? have you got a father too?

It was now the girl's turn.

"His papa! oh! he's *such* a clever man."

The little boy's face glowed with honest pride.

What sensibility, I thought. Is it possible little children of this age can be alive to such feelings?—I have learned since, that children equally young are, though rarely to be found, quite as alive to the noble sense of glory.

"And this clever man? Is he a soldier too?"

"No, sir, if you please, he's a doctor."

"Dr. Lewis, is he called?"

"No, sir, he's called Mr. Lewis."

"And where does he live?"

"He lives in the street, and he's got such a grand shop. It's all full of glass things, and there's birds in cases, too, in the parlour..."

"And there's a skeleton and a crocodile somewhere," put in the little boy with energy.

"Why, what a great man your father must

be. — Is he very proud of all these fine things ?"

"No, he's not proud at all," murmured the little girl; "he's *very* kind to everybody, and he does grandmamma such good !"

"I should like to know both Fabian's clever papa and Amy's grandmamma. But where are you both going to now ?"

"We're going to see Job, if you please."

"Who's Job ?"

"He's the gardener at the Hall, and a very great friend of Fabian and me."

"Well, I believe I've got a letter for Job, and I am going to see him too. Shall we walk together ? and then you can show me the way."

With all the engaging confidence and simplicity of early childhood, a little hand was put into each of mine, and we three set out together, already the best friends in the world.

CHAPTER III.

"....Ye flowers and plants! from your bright faces,
Blossoming light and joy, ye give to us
And take impresses of a deeper tone,
Indwelling drawn, not from our life, but yours."
Man in Paradise—JOHN EDMUND READE.

WE had a pleasant walk between the banks of the cool green lane, where the sand, in all variety of tints, from warm brown, through golden yellow, to silver white, kept cropping out between low knots of underwood, leafy tufts and flowers, and waving grasses.

My little companions seemed soon quite at home with me, and prattled cheerfully as we went along.

I thought I never had a pleasanter walk in my life.

I do love nice little children — almost as much, I was about to say, but that would be an exaggeration—as I abhor ill-managed, rude little diminutives of the cub order.

Our way did not lead us across the park, something to my disappointment. I wanted to expatiate under those lofty trees, and among those green velvet lawns that looked so tempting this fine evening; but I found my little friends were not in the habit of proceeding through the great gates; we passed them, and followed the windings of the lane which led to that wilderness of heterogeneous things—that true representation of the cords and pulleys of material life, —the back of extensive gardens.

We made our way in silence, among heaps of compost, pits filled with leaves, unsightly sheds, pumps, tools, and gardeners pushing wheelbarrows before them; whilst my little children seemed to look about in vain for their friend Job.

I did not particularly like my situation—introduced there by two little stranger children only. I thought the men looked at me in an impertinent sort of manner, as much as to ask what business had I there; and it is a weakness of mine to be particularly susceptible to, and easily cowed by, the impertinent.

However, we met with no positive interruption till the children approached a round-topped green door in the wall, when a man, who was coming out, first glancing at the children, whom he seemed to know, and then at me, civilly enough took off his hat, and asked me what I was in search of.

I said I had a letter from Mrs. Tilley, at the Charles in the Oak Tree, for Job, who I believed was one of the head gardeners; I wished to be allowed to see the gardens. These two children had been coming to visit the same person, and had shown me the way.

The man gave a glance at the children, as much as to say "all right," and said if I

would go through that door we should find Job in the houses.

So we entered the really magnificent garden which lay within the walls.

There are few things charm me more than one of these splendid old-fashioned kitchen gardens. This one was really a magnificent specimen of the sort. The walls extended far on every side; the glass of a long line of houses was sparkling in the evening sun; the windows mostly open, and displaying the riches within—grapes, pines, peaches, and costly flowers of every form and hue. The rest of the walls were covered with fruit trees trained in the finest order, and loaded with fruit; the cherry and the currant trees, which ran spirally between them, were already tinting with their various reds and crimsons, the wall fruits were still green.

The garden was laid out in broad, smooth, gravel walks, edged with trim box, and bordered by beds filled with all sorts of flowers, in abundance. Standard fruit trees were symme-

trically arranged between the flowers and the vegetables of every description, which were growing in a most delightful profusion.

I think I have seen many larger gardens, but I think I never saw one so perfectly kept as this; so rich in beauty of every description.

It did great credit to those who had the management of it.

I began to fear that I should find the head gardener a regular gentleman of the improved school—as great a disappointment, to me, as was, I remember, the last edition (twenty-second, I think it was) of Abercromby's Complete Gardener—when I found the graphic simplicity of the old, garrulous, and minute instructor, exchanged for a scientific and somewhat pedantic exposition, which to me, a mere *dilettanti* gardener, taught little or nothing.

It is very wrong I know, but I am always inclined to take fight at the accomplished gentlemen of the present day, who preside over the gardens and estates of others. I know it is all

my own whim, or, perhaps, my own ignorance; but so it is, and therefore, in no very satisfactory mood, I followed the children into the garden, and was beginning to look towards the houses, expecting to see my gentleman emerge from one of them, when, with a shout of joy, and "There's Job!" both little ones started gladly forward. This drew my attention to a tall, very soberly-dressed figure, with a watering pot in his hand, who was slowly advancing up the broad gravel walk, which divided the garden into two equal portions. He kept stopping as he came along, to examine this plant or that, to set this straight, or give a little water to another.

The children rushed towards him, and had soon hold one of each brown and rugged hand.

"Well, well, what are ye making such a fuss about, little ones?" said he, good-humouredly; "but who is that gentleman with you?"

"We don't know," said Amy; "but he wants you, I believe, so we shewed him the way."

"Any business with me, sir, and please you?" said the gardener, approaching me.

He was, as I said, a tall, spare man, with something particularly wiry and sinewy about him. His face was a collection of rugged lines, which told of indefatigable labour, and a life's exposure to sun and weather. He had not the least in the world the appearance of a regularly educated, scientific man; yet there was an air of intelligence, and a certain authority about him, which showed him to be far from belonging to the common sort.

A gravity, mingled with a touch of sarcastic shrewdness, extreme plainness of manner without rudeness—in short, he was one who reminded one of that antique world, with its somewhat stern, but honest sense and virtue, which has been regretted from the days of Shakespere until now.

He stood there with the two little children, one hanging upon each bronzed and sinewy hand, looking down upon them from time to

time with a kindliness that gave much charm to his own somewhat harsh countenance.

"Would you be wanting to speak with me—with Job, sir?"

"I had a great wish to see the place and the gardens, which belong to a distant relation of mine, and Mrs. Tilley gave me a note to you."

"All right," was the answer. "You will be liking to see the houses, no doubt. We've a few choice things there—but if you would walk about the garden a little, whilst I dispatch my business with these two babies, I would be obliged to you."

"May I follow you, if I shall not be in the way?"

"Oh, sir," with a little low laugh, which was peculiar to him, "the business will soon be dispatched between us. These small creatures are good little things in the main. — Well," turning to them, "where's your strawberries?"

The children presented their basket. Job examined the contents with some care.

"All right," said he, returning the basket to Amy. "And now you may each gather a score of the largest giant strawberries you can find, to lay atop of those you've brought."

"It's carrying coals to Newcastle like, to make those little creatures bring *me* strawberries," he remarked, as the children flew away to the long lines of strawberry beds, where an abundant harvest of rich crimson fruit was peering from among the green leaves. "But you see, sir," turning to me, "I'm not one as has been brought up among the slack-handed of these days. It's not the fashion here—We, at this place, like children to be brought up in the way they should go. We like even such bits as those to understand the nature of man's life here below.—Earn and have.—Give of the labour of thy hands according to thy power, and expect the increase. I don't think it meet to give even such little ones as those their measure of strawberries for the old lady, their grandmother, without exacting some trouble on their own part.

Let them labour of their best, before they expect their baskets to be filled. It's Bible doctrine that, or I'm mistaken."

"So you expect them to prove their industry by gathering wild strawberries, such as they are, before they expect you to give them your fine ones—a good idea—very right."

"Aye, aye, there are plenty of idle vagabonds brought up every day to live by the sweat of another's brow.....Job won't lend a hand in the manufacture;" and he gave another low laugh.

"Is that the principle of the place, or your own individual notion?" I asked.

"Why, as much as it's in her; she strives to do it—but she's a too soft heart—a too soft heart," repeated the old man, and his tone sweetened as if the very allusion to her was enough to tender his tones.

"She! Ellen? Lady Vynour, you mean?"

"Aye, sir, surely do I. We have her name in our mouths and in our hearts—but would

you like to see the houses? She likes flowers, that she does, rarely. Not like fine ladies, to make posies to simper over and throw away. No, she loves the flower—she loves the beauty and the curiosity of these rarely finished works of the good and great Maker, and she knows a power about them too.....Ah! but she's a rare woman is that—such as have their price above rubies."

Thus talking or muttering to himself, rather than addressing me, we reached the door of one of the houses, and as he opened it, I was almost as much dazzled as delighted by the prospect before me—such a profusion of beauty.

It was one of the forcing houses, and the huge bunches of purple and green grapes hung in rich abundance from the vines, which ran mantling with their green tendrils and branches over the sashes above, whilst beneath them, spread out as upon a table, were the peach and nectarine trees, covered with blushing crimson fruit, splendid in size and colour alike, and look-

ing most deliciously inviting. A garland of hot-house flowers in full blow ran round the house, like a riband of the finest colours.

I thought I had never seen anything so beautiful.

I expressed my admiration warmly.

"Aye, aye, it's all as she would have it."

"But she is not here to enjoy it—what a pity!"

He shook his head.

"That's it—So it is in this world—folks can't be everywhere at once—It's the cumber of riches, I sometimes think. What's the use?—Man has but one pair of eyes, ditto hands, ditto feet. He can scarce get at his own wealth, when he's so much of it—what profit is there in all my pains, but to send her baskets of fruit and cut flowers, that's all;" and he went on, opening succession house after succession house.

We ended by the garden door at which we had entered, where my two little friends were

standing, their basket piled up with magnificent strawberries, which were partly covered up with strawberry leaves.

"Will you please to count if it's all right?" said the little girl, gently.

He gave a glance at the basket.

"I'll be bound it is—I'll trust you this once—heigh, little ones! and now go home, for it's getting late, and they'll be wanting you, I reckon. Good night, Amy; my respects to your grandmother.—Good night, Fabian; my love to your mother. Off with you both;" and the children disappeared through the garden door.

"You'll be liking to see the pleasure grounds, I'm thinking, sir," Job then said, turning to me; "I'll walk them over with you, if so be that you wish to see them."

"I do wish it particularly, if you can spare me so much of your time," and I glanced at the watering-pot which was still in his hand.

"The day's work is nearly over," was the reply, putting down the watering-pot. "It's a

pleasure to a man to shew them things to those who have the true feeling about them. This way, sir, if you please."

* * * * *

The sun was getting low by the time I had walked, accompanied by Job, through the gardens and pleasure-grounds of the Hall.

In the course of the conversation, or rather of his talk, for my share in the discourse was but small, I obtained a good general idea of Ellen's character. He seemed never weary of dwelling upon her excellencies; upon the nature of the impression she produced upon those around her; her principles and ways of proceeding.

They seemed to me admirable. Such a combination of firmness and indulgence—such a desire, not only to administer to the comforts of the *animal*, but to elevate and improve the *man!*—Not by denying him recreation and pleasure, but by endeavouring to alter the character of his recreations and pleasures, by exciting the taste and

desire for pure forms of enjoyment. Thus, to countervail the fascinations of the ale-house, the gin-shop, and of still more vicious indulgences, by substituting better and higher; everything being made subservient to her one grand object, the making the people around her sincere Christians, and real children of God.

Job and I were so completely agreed in our admiration of Lady Vynour, that a sudden friendship shot up between us; and it was with very cordial expressions of his hope that I would come up again, and look over the flower-garden with him, and more especially, that I should return and visit Lady Vynour, who was expected before very long—that we parted.

The two little ones had already set forward, as I said, upon the return home, when Job and I separated; but I overtook them, walking hand in hand up the lane. Before I had joined them, however, they had stopped at the place where I had seen them at first, and seemed to be debating upon some interesting subject.

The boy appeared wanting to stop—the little girl to go on.

I came up to them before they were aware.

Amy was saying,—

"Foolish boy!—You'll never get at them, and you'll be stung...and besides, it's getting late, and grandmamma will wonder what's become of me. Come along, there's a good boy; we must not stop, indeed."

"But it's a tapestry bee—it's the most curious thing in the world," said the infant Linnæus, imploringly; and with his voice faltering as if he were going to cry.

"But we can't—can't get it; and what's the use? Come along, there's a good boy;" and she attempted to pull him forward, but the embryo professor was obstinate, and would not move.

"Oh! what shall I do?—what *shall* I do, if you won't come? It's getting late, and grandmamma will want me. Do come—do come—there's a good boy—do come!"

Her little face was the picture of distress.

It was time for the *Deus ex machinâ* to appear.

"What do you want, little fellow? To take a bee's nest?" I began, coming up to them.

"Oh! it's a tapestry bee."

The argument seemed to him irrefragable—the object irresistible.

"Well, suppose I try what I can do to take it for you?"

He clasped his hands in ecstacy; but the little girl said, with a look of increasing distress,—

"Will it be very long doing? because it's very, very late, and we ought to go home."

"We'll see about that—and if it can't be done to-night, why, suppose we come and try again to-morrow. Show me the place, Fabian."

And in an instant the little fellow was struggling with hands and knees up the mossy bank. He crept under a bush of blackthorn, and screamed with delight, as he found the spot.

I followed him, scrambling up the bank as well as I could; but the ground was slippery, and I was awkward. I was in danger of coming down head foremost into the lane, and catching hold of a branch to save myself, unfortunately I ran a large thorn right into the palm of my hand, and broke it there.

A few drops of blood flowed, and the hand felt painful.

"I have hurt my hand," I said; "I can't help you now;" and I got down the bank and began to get out my pocket-handkerchief.

Tapestry bees and grandmammas were forgotten directly.

"Oh! it bleeds, it bleeds!" exclaimed both the children at once.

"Have you hurt it very, very much?" asked Amy, anxiously.

"Not much, dear; but there's an end of taking bees' nests for to-night, so come along, my man—we'd best all go home."

We walked on accordingly; and by the time

we had proceeded about a quarter of a mile, I felt my hand begin to swell, and to grow excessively painful.

I parted with my two little friends at the entrance of the village, and repaired to my friend, Mrs. Tilley, to show her my hand.

"It's a trifling accident; merely a bit of blackthorn run into the palm; but it has swelled very much, and it really hurts me exceedingly."

"It looks bad, sir, indeed; let me bathe it in warm water."

Which she did, but with little good effect.

"It's an ugly sort of thing, sir. I don't think it is a piece of blackthorn. In that lane there were a good many acacia-trees planted some years ago, and cut down for scrub. I doubt whether you have not ran an acacia-thorn through your hand, and they are most venomous things. I think, sir, it ought to be extracted by the doctor. Had you not better let me send for Mr. Lewis?"

"That is not necessary; but I agree with you, he may as well see it. I'll walk down to his shop—where is it?"

"Just round that corner, sir—about twenty paces. You can't mistake it—there's the surgery on one side."

I set out again, my hand really becoming excessively troublesome; I began to think an acacia-thorn *was* a most venomous thing.

I turned the corner, and was not long in reaching Mr. Lewis's.

It was the tiniest and most modest of cottages of gentility that ever was seen, for it was too small to merit the honour of being called a house; it was modern built and villa like—but so excessively small! It stood apart, separated from the road and from the village by the most miniature of domains, formed by a little grass-plat, crossed by a gravel walk in front; a small kitchen garden behind, and a narrow flower bedclose by the wall of the house, kept very neatly, and with a few rather choice flowers in it.

The surgery, a small lean-to, with a sloping roof, was upon one side.

The house had a door of its own, and one window in front, belonging to the parlour, which parlour opened into the surgery.

Everything had an air of neatness and order the most complete; but frugality, not to say sparingness, was evident in every detail.

The surgery, or rather shop, into which I made my way, was, however, larger and more roomy than it appeared from without. It was well stored with medicines in drawers, on shelves, in boxes, or in bottles, all arranged in the nicest order; every glass vessel shining like crystal; every object in metal bright as gold itself. The whole formed quite a pretty spectacle. A counter ran down the side next to the house wall, against which, as being the loftiest—for indeed it reached to the roof of the building—jars and bottles containing medicines were arranged.

A young and very pleasing-looking woman

was sitting, busily engaged in fine needlework, behind the counter.

She looked up as I entered, and, rising from her chair, asked me what I was pleased to want?

"I want to see Mr. Lewis. Is he at home?"

"No, sir, I am sorry to say he is not. He has been sent for to Marston-in-the-Marsh."

"And when do you expect him back?"

"I cannot exactly say, sir. There had been a bad accident. It is impossible to say how long he may be detained. Can I do anything, if you please? I have learned to read and make up prescriptions. You may trust me; I am very careful."

"It is not a prescription I want made up. I have hurt my hand."

"Anything very serious, sir?" observing my hand muffled up in my pocket-handkerchief. "Would you dislike to let me look at it? I know a little about wounds."

"I have only run a thorn into it; but it is

swelled, and pains me a good deal;" opening the linen and displaying the hand, which looked very much inflamed, and ugly enough.

She took the hand into hers, white and delicate as that of the most eminent of surgeons, and examined it with great care and attention.

"The thorn has broken in the palm of the hand, and has entered a good way, I fear."

"Mrs. Tilley thinks it is an acacia-thorn. I met with the little accident in the lane leading to the Hall."

"There are a good many acacia-bushes there, I know, sir. I should be sorry to think it was a thorn of that sort. I believe they are very irritating. I think I have heard Mr. Lewis say so, and this seems so large a one, and broken so deeply in, that I am afraid I must not venture to meddle with it. My advice would be, to apply a large poultice to keep down the inflammation, and that you would step through that door into our little sitting-room, and keep quite quiet till

Mr. Lewis comes back. He cannot be very long, I think."

"I will take your advice, if it will not inconvenience you; and will you kindly order a poultice such as you prescribe, to be made?"

"I will make it myself in a moment," she said. "Please let me pass to close the lower half of the shop door: I never leave it open when I am not at my place. This way, if you please—there is a step, sir."

And having thus secured her little shop, she marshalled me into what she called her sitting-room.

A nice, little, cosy cabinet of a place it was; very small, but most cheerfully and prettily furnished, and, like the cabin of a ship, everything fitted so exactly into its place, as to afford the greatest possible economy of room.

The curtains were of a delicate blue chintz, with small fuchsia flowers trailing over it; the paper of a minute, but nicely finished pattern; the carpet very pretty, with two or three little

pieces of green baize over the most frequented portions. Over the chimney-piece there was a small mirror framed with diminutive cases, in which were some specimens of insects and very minute birds. On each side of the room were more cases, some filled with books nicely arranged, others with birds, shells, and various natural curiosities. The whole apartment breathed an air of neatness and tasteful arrangement that was excessively pleasing. The only articles of luxury to be seen being a large and delicious sofa, almost too big for the room, and a very comfortable arm-chair. The rest of the furniture was all excessively simple and inexpensive, but what one would call good of its kind.

Not the slightest attempt at pretence or ostentation was to be seen. It was the *honestest*, as well as the nicest, little drawing-room I ever saw in my life.

By this time the pain in my hand and arm became such that I felt quite sick.

She saw, I suppose, that I looked pale.

"You seem to suffer a good deal," she said. "Will you please to rest on the sofa? You had better lie down; you look faint." Arranging the cushions as she spoke: "Pray lie down, sir, and let me throw up the window. I will get a scarf to put the hand in, and you shall have the poultice as soon as possible."

She flung up the window as she spoke, whilst I obeyed and laid myself down upon the sofa, for I felt as if I could hardly stand. She went into the shop, and returned speedily with something in a glass.

"Take that, sir, if you please; it will do you good."

"Thank you;" returning the glass, and looking at her—I could not help it—with something of the admiration I felt; for she was, indeed, a most pleasing creature. "You seem quite a physician yourself."

"I only do my best to be of use when Mr.

Lewis is of necessity from home," she said, simply, and left the room.

Soon she returned with fine white linen in her hand, and a great, stout, rosy girl, whose cheeks and bare red arms were perfectly shining with cleanly brightness, following her.

The saucepan and plate were taken from the girl's hand, the large cataplasm spread by herself was applied, and the injured limb bound up, with the neatness and skill of a professor; and then, at a word, girl, saucepan, plate, and remains of poultice vanished, and the little apartment looked as trim and *genteel* as ever.

I forgot to mention a glass full of fine flowers that stood in the centre of the little round table, near the sofa.

"Does your arm feel more comfortable?" she asked, when she had settled it in the scarf, which she tied round my neck, had arranged the cushions, laid me in the most easy of positions, and thrown a shawl over me, all which little cares made me feel very comfortable. "My

advice would be, that you should remain quite still till Mr. Lewis comes; and perhaps you will allow me to return to the shop, for I may be wanted. I will leave the door open, and be with you again, if you will speak but a word. I should be glad, however, if you could get a little sleep. The accident, I dare say, seems to you a trifling one; but one cannot be too careful in all that regards the hand. The muscles and tendons are so delicate and complicated, and whenever there is faintness and sickness, with swelling and inflammation supervening, the best thing is to be perfectly quiet until proper assistance can be had."

"I will do as you wish me. I don't think I shall go to sleep; but I will be good and do as I am bid, and try to amuse myself with looking at that beautiful nosegay. What a good gardener you must be!"

"The flowers are not from our own garden. I have not time to pay the attention necessary to raise such flowers as those, nor has Mr. Lewis,

though we are both very fond of gardening; but our time is too much taken up."

"Yours! why, you cannot have such a vast deal to do, surely!" This was rather bordering upon the impertinent, I confess. I have such bad manners where I am interested; and I wanted to provoke her to tell me a good deal more about herself, this model of a wife. Yes, there was no doubt this was the wife of whom Job had spoken in such high terms.

I have omitted to relate in its proper place how Job, speaking of his favourite little children, had broken out in praise of the mother of the little boy, both as wife and mother, saying in his quaint way, that if many women were like Mrs. Lewis it might have been the worse for him—for sure and certain he didn't think he could have continued the bachelor he was if he had chanced to meet with her double, "and that would have been a *real* misfortune to a man, you know, sir," with one of his little inward laughs.

She made no answer. There was a ring at the shop door, which was cut in half, according to a fashion now exploded, when everybody almost can afford to keep a boy or girl to "see to the shop." She hastily passed through the door of communication, leaving it half open, to my great joy, as here was a promise of some amusement to beguile the time whilst I was kept waiting.

A woman's voice and a baby's mewl were heard, as the door of the surgery opened, and admitted the new comers.

"Mary Wood!" I heard uttered in the young wife's sweet, pleasant voice, "and the baby—well, how is he going on?"

"Oh, he's so restless, ever sin' that *nasty* vaccivation—what don' you call it? I can't think how ever I come to be such a fool as to let Mr. Lewis do it. He's pison'd the child. A nasty, beastly thing, as comes, they tell me, from a cow! I wonder he aint ashamed to use Christian folk so. I'm sure, an I'd guessed it

come from a cow, I'd ha' seen him far enough before I'd ha' let him ha' touched my child. Why, if the poor chilt's arm aint swelled as big as two!"

"Let me look at it. Why, what would you have? It's doing as nicely as possible."

"Nicely, indeed! That's what you call nicely, is it? Why, I never saw such a hawful thing in all my life, and on a babby, too! A five months' old babby! To put it to such a torturing! I think Mr. Lewis be the cruelest creature in the world, with all his new-fangled notions. My mother knew a power of things about illnesses, and yarbs, and fevers, and babbies, and never see I her put a nasty cow's disease into a poor innocent babby's arm. Ay, you may well cry, my darling! It was the barbarousest thing ever I heard tell of in my life."

"But it was to save him from the small-pox —you don't seem to understand. It was to save him from the possibility of that dreadful

disease, the small-pox, which might have killed him, you know."

"And how do I know an' it woll save him? And besides, how do ye know he'd ever take the small-pox? I'll tell you what, Mrs. Lewis—an' Mr. Lewis trusted a little more in Providence, instead o' flying to all these out o' nature things o' his, I think it'd be a little more to the credit of his soul—cutting babbies about a' this ins, and making their arms as red and as big as my own—and not one wink o' sleep either he or I had last night—and all for keeping off o' small-pox!—save ye—that may never come, for anything any o' us know. Why, there's hundreds as never has it, I know. I wish for my part I'd never come near Mr. Lewis, I do. Tim Jones, at Morton, 's worth a hundred of him, only it's so far to go. He's a honest man is Tim—he's none o' your new-fangled ones—not he."

"I am sorry you look upon it so; but I assure you the vaccination has taken as nicely

as possible, and you will be glad some time or other that you let it be done." And then she kindly and carefully gave a few simple directions how to allay the irritation produced by the complaint, and concluded by—"But you look very bad, and tired with your walk. Biddy's just at her tea, won't you step down and rest yourself, and have a cup with her?"

"No; none of your tea for me, thank you, ma'am.....not but what it's very right of you to be civil, and please your husband's customers—and you're always pretty spoken, I must say. But as for him, takin' in a poor woman and treatin' a babby in this fashion, I say it's a shame and a sin. Nothing to be done, say you, but wait patient till it's over? A matter of two days more you're not ashamed to tell me—and not a wink of sleep all night—poor, dear babby!"

"Well, just do as I bid you, and both you and baby will sleep to-night; and it will soon be over—and some time or other you will be

glad that you have followed Mr. Lewis's advice."

The woman went grumbling away; and Mrs. Lewis having just peeped in upon me, and I, having closed my eyes, appearing to be asleep, she returned to the shop, and sat down behind the counter to her work again.

The shop door opened anon, and a child was heard asking for "six pen'orth of hopum, if you please, ma'am."

"Whom is it for?"

"Betty Green—her as sent for it the morn."

"But Betty Green knows it's no use to send —I won't give it her."

"But she bids me say, ma'am, as how she *will* have it—and as how you *must* sell it. You keeps open shop, and you *must* sell it."

"Go and tell her that I won't sell it—it is very bad for her. She's killing herself with it. I told her how to manage herself so as to get over this evil habit—and not a bit of opium does she get from me to-day."

The child went away, and I heard Mrs. Lewis go to the surgery door and fasten it.

In about five minutes somebody was shaking the door violently.

"Let me in!—What do you fasten the shop door for? Let me in, I tell you! *You* pretend to keep a physic shop! and refuse decent people, as is dying of the tooth-ache, a bit of stuff!"

"Tooth-ache, Betty!—Don't try to impose upon me. You know I will not sell you any opium. You know I told you so before. You know what pains Mr. Lewis has been taking to break you of this vile habit—worse, even, than going to the gin-shop, it is. You know he will not sell his physic to minister to a great and growing sin. You know he would rather shut up shop at once than do it. If you feel *very* low this afternoon, I'll give you a little stuff that will keep you up a bit; but I can't, and won't, give you a grain of opium. You know it is your disgrace and ruin, and will end by bringing you to a miserable death."

"I don't care what it is; but I can't and won't bear what you make me bear. Mr. Lewis is the cruelest doctor that ever was born; and it's not I, but every one else, that's a saying so. He's a heart of stone. He's no more bowels for the poor than this wooden door; nor you neither, mealy-mouthed as you look. Now do —do—do, missus—this once, give me a bit—only this once———this once—you don't know what a hell I am in."

"I am very, very sorry for you. I know you suffer horribly at times, poor woman! but it must be—there is nothing else to be done. Here, take this stuff; it will help you a little—you must—indeed you must bear it."

"Hang your filthy stuff, you hard-hearted Jezebel!"

And I heard breaking splinters, as if the glass window panes were being dashed through.

The woman left the door, Mrs. Lewis returned to her seat, and this time I heard her utter a heavy sigh. But, discouraging as all

this must have been, she seemed soon to recover her spirits; and as patient succeeded to patient, and child to child, asking for advice or pen'orths of this and that, answered all the demands upon her with inexhaustible good humour The children were cheerfully served, and with sundry little merry laughs and jokes at their blunders and mistakes; the patients were treated with the same mild yet resolute kindness.

At last the evening began to draw on, the visits of the customers seemed to have come to an end, and silence was beginning to prevail in the street and the shop, when the door was roughly pushed open, and a step which appeared to be that of a young man entering was heard.

CHAPTER IV.

"For not to know at large of things remote, obscure,
But to know that which before us lies in daily life,
Is the prime wisdom."

Paradise Lost.

Mrs. Lewis started up from her seat with a short, smothered cry, like that of one, as it seemed to me, in pain.

"Well, how do you do, missis?" began the new comer. "Is Walter at home?"

"How are you, Paul? You took me by surprise. I thought you were in London."

"You don't look very particularly glad to see me, Kate, whether you thought me in London

or no. No, I am not in London, as you see. I came down to have a talk with Walter. I have brought something with me that will please him, I guess, whether it does you or not. Will you condescend to look at it?"

"Ah, Paul!...But will you not take a seat? Walter is out. Don't go into the parlour, there is a gentlemen there who has met with an accident. I hope he has fallen asleep."

I made a little moving upon this, and coughed slightly, to show that I was not asleep.

They neither of them seemed to trouble themselves whether I was asleep or no—they went on talking.

"Had you not better shut the door?" at last, I said, for now I found that family affairs were about to be discussed: I thought it treacherous to listen.

She put the door to, upon this, but did not fasten it, and went on speaking in a low tone, so that I did not at first hear anything that was going on; but presently they seemed

both to forget that any one was in the parlour; and do what I might by various warning noises, I could not help being made acquainted with a good deal of what passed.

There was a rustling of papers. Then I heard Mrs. Lewis say, "Ah, Paul, such gifts as yours!"

He answered with considerable self-complacency, betrayed by the tone of his voice—

"You acknowledge them, then?"

"I have ever acknowledged them."

"And yet you would have the *insigne* barbarity to condemn me to the life I am now leading. Such a life! Was ever galley slave chained to the oar so miserable a victim of oppression as I? The fresh wind of heaven, at least, plays upon his cheek—at least, he can lift his face upwards to the azure sky—can gaze upon the beaming sun—stretch his view over the mighty ocean. Liberty of the soul, at least, is his!—but mine! I wish you knew what it was;—could be made to understand it. Nor Walter either—but no, he

can never be made to comprehend it. He cannot form the slightest idea approaching to it. He is made to toil, be prudent, get money, and end life a prosperous man. He can sit by the hour, casting up his figures and making out his bills, and look as content and pleased with himself when he has done it, as if he had composed the 'Iliad!' I can't do that. It kills me to do that. The dull routine of monotonous employment was never meant for me. Mr. Strickland was nothing short of a barbarian to condemn me to it."

"Mr. Strickland thought it was for the best. You know you never *would* apply at school. He was impartial, and would have opened to you, as well as to Walter, the way to a more intellectual occupation if you would have studied for it; but you know you did not like that."

"Like that! It was not very likely—Such a boy as I was, is not exactly made to like *that*, as you call it!—grinding with the nose down to the millstone—grind, grind, grind, at

dry, useless, antiquated stuff, such as they teach in what they call their schools! They might thrash me to atoms, but thank my better nature!—genius! if you will—they never could thrash their rubbish into me—nor that better thing that was in me, out of me."

"But you are too clever, Paul, not to know very well, that without the foundation of resolute, persevering study, no success in any of the higher walks of industry can be obtained."

"Walks of industry!—as if there was no virtue, or excellence under the sun, but in what you are pleased to designate as the walks of industry! I tell you, Kate, that I was born for better things; and do or say what you will to persuade me, or to persuade Walter to keep me lashed to the oar, sooner or later I shall burst my fetters and soar—where—where—I was destined, by the bountiful hand of nature, to soar!—but tell me, do you like the verses?"

"There is something that seems to me very grand and powerful about them; but you know,

with my ideas, I cannot enter into—I cannot approve the sentiments."

"As if any one expected you would! I was a fool to let such a regular old stager as you look at the lines—you! . . . but I beg your pardon, my dear Kate, it is not your fault that you were born quite behind your age—'to suckle fools and chronicle small beer,' eh, Kate? Shakespeare thought *that* the only legitimate vocation of even the most accomplished of women. Ideas are a little advanced upon that subject, as upon many others, since then—but you! you are content to think as your great grandmother, Mrs. Hopchickery, thought, and go drudging on as she did."

"If you mean that I am despicable enough to be content to love my husband and my dear little Fabian with all my heart, and to spend my life in trying to make them comfortable, I am very much afraid what you say is true—whatever my great grandmother, Mrs. Hopchickery, as you please to call her, may have

done or thought;" and she laughed. "But now just tell me candidly, Paul, should *you* like to have one of the new sort for your own wife? answer me that—or would you not, after all, like better to take up with a poor, grovelling slave like me? Now speak the truth . . ."

"Pooh, pooh! what is that to the question? I am an exception, perhaps, to the common rule; you must not quote me—but where can Walter be gone?"

"He's gone to Marston-in-the-Marsh, to see a patient."

"Riding the old grey, still?"

"Riding the old grey, still."

"Well, if I were an industrious, thriving, country practitioner like him, I'd get something of a better nag than that, would I not? I wonder he's not ashamed of the poor rosin. Why, she's twenty years old if she's a day, I take it—and such a spectacle!"

"She *is* old, but she's sound yet; and till she gives in, we shall make her do."

"You are the most stingy pair of people in the universe, that everybody knows. Well, take your own way."

"So we intend to do...but in the meantime I beg your pardon, I have not asked you whether you will take anything—a cup of tea?—a glass of wine?"

"Wine! Have you really such a thing in the house? I thought you and Walter forswore wine; it was too costly, forsooth!"

"Whether we do or no, is not the matter in question: the question is, will *you* have wine or tea?"

"Wine, to be sure, if you have any in the house; I hate tea."

"There is inspiration in wine, some of your great poets say; but I think there is more in tea. However, you shall not be baulked of your wine, and in return, perhaps, you will shew me something that will suit my humble capacity better than those fiery odes you have just given me to read."

"Well, give me a glass of wine, and we'll see."

I heard the uncorking of a bottle.

"Why! do you keep your wine in your shop? faugh!"

"It is the only place I have. It won't taste of rhubarb, believe me."

"It's capital!" drinking and smacking his lips; "I don't care if you give me another glass —better and better—third time pays for all. Another, and then you shall have my song."

There was once more a rustling of paper, and afterwards a pause—she was reading the verses, I concluded.

"This is really beautiful," she said.

"And you really like it? you really do?—Why I declare, if you have not a something twinkling in your eye, you soft, dear, silly creature! And so you fancy that better than my odes."

"A thousand times."

"Better than 'Tremble, ye tyrants!' &c. &c."

"Why, those verses you dislike are enough to

rouse a spirit in the very dead themselves . . . but you love tea better than wine, I think you told me."

"In all ways"—

"Will Walter never come in, I wonder what he can be about?—I must be off soon. I have got leave for only three days, and this evening is devoted to a set of choice fellows—fellows that can kindle at an ode and defy a tyrant!...that love wine better than tea—ay, and blood better than slavery, I can tell you."

"Oh, Paul! how can you talk so?"

"I tell you,"—in an excited voice,—"you don't know what it is!—you speak of what you don't understand. You are a woman, and made to be a slave...and you are free of the sweet air of God, and never tried it. You don't know what a galling sense of serfdom it is—The rebellion of the heart! the fierce raging of the spirit against the accursed, cursed yoke!"

"Dear Paul! don't, pray don't, go on in this way. You talk till you persuade yourself

of the justice of what you say. What is there so very cruel, so very galling, so very hard, in being obliged to do that which thousands and thousands are contentedly doing every day?—and in such a house as the Messrs. Howish's, too!—"

"Such a house! You don't know what you are talking about. It's the most horrid, odious slave bazaar of any house in London."

"You astonish me!—and when it cost Mr. Strickland such infinite pains to get you received there. Why, does not everybody say the same thing—that Mr. Howish treats his young men as if they were his children? Pays the greatest attention to their comforts, and, what is a thousand times more important, to their religion and morals; he——"

"Religion and morals!—humbug! Oh, yes, he pays the most sedulous attention to our religion and morals—no doubt of it! Every man Jack must be at home by ten o'clock in the evening, for family prayers. Very exemplary

of him, ain't it?—But mark me—this keeps all regular—makes us fit for shop and all alert by eight o'clock in the morning. Up to our business!—keep early hours!—catch one of your righteous ones neglecting the main chance! Give me a hollow tree, a crust of bread, and liberty! What do I care for his comforts, his clean beds, and his roast mutton? I'd rather sleep under the filthiest and closest counter in the city than under damask, so I might have my freedom and keep my own hours. Home at ten o'clock!—just when the heart begins to expand, the spirits to rise—fellows to get warm, and good company!—to be obliged to sneak home, like Tom the footboy, to bed and prayers! That's it—exactly it—and what I can't and won't bear—others may, but I won't. I've made up my mind—I'll burst my fetters—I'll break my articles, and have done with it!"

"But what on earth will become of you, then?"

"I don't care what becomes of me, I tell you—

I can't and won't bear it. I won't, because I can't. Others may drudge—some are born to be drudges. I verily believe the most part have such vile meanness of spirit that they like it—verily they like to be other men's slaves—coming home at ten o'clock to porridge and prayers! Good boys—good boys all—but I ain't one of them. I must have liberty. I was born for pleasure; I was born to give pleasure, and to taste pleasure. It's true enough what you say—under the unjust, villanous, and tyrannous systems of this old, worn-out, prejudice-trodden society of ours, it *is* very difficult for a man like me—a man of genius—I'm not ashamed to call myself so—it *is* very difficult for a man of genius to know how to bestow himself! But one thing I do know—I'll no longer be the slave of an old canting hypocrite, with his pockets full of gold of *my* earning, and who gives me in return a paltry stipend, his mutton and his prayers! What if his mutton be good—it *ought* to be good—and we'd make a pretty row, some of us,

if it wasn't good—no thanks to him for *that*;—And as for his prayers, he may keep them to himself. What do I want with his prayers?"

"Oh, Paul! Paul! don't talk in this shocking manner. You know I ought not—I cannot bear, and I will not bear, to listen to you."

"Oh, I beg your pardon—I most humbly beg your pardon—I forgot whom I was speaking to. I am apt to forget where I am when I become excited. One must speak with all due reverence of psalms, and hymns, and such trumpery before you. You are a regular one, I know of old—one of the proper school, and go to church every Sunday, and I don't know what all; but this I will say for you, Kate, you are not like that old tyrannical canting Puritan Jedidiah Howish—you don't try to force your notions upon me. You don't refuse me my bit of roast beef on a Sunday because I like better to sit upon a bank of primroses, smoking my cigar and adoring nature, than to hear old Pemberton prose—I must do you that justice—

I really beg your pardon for offending your prejudices."

"You know how very much I dislike your irreverent way of talking, when you touch upon serious subjects. If I do not insist upon your going to church, it is because I have no authority over you. I am quite of Mr. Howish's way of thinking, as regards those in my own service. I make Biddy go. But it is useless for me to interfere with you."

"Service!—Really, Kate, I must say you make use of very odd expressions—Biddy, indeed! Sister mine, I think you are not altogether of the politest—evening me with Biddy—I thought you would not condescend to be rude, even in defence of your church-going notions."

"Indeed I did not mean to offend you, and I beg your pardon. But what does a word misapplied, or rightly applied, matter?—The main question is, what you are to do? or, how to get your living in any other way?"

"The main question is, that I won't get it in this way, make you sure of *that*—and I am come to ask advice from Walter as to the matter. I suppose it would do no good to get him to write to Mr. Strickland?"

"That you know it would not. I have heard Walter repeat a thousand times what Mr. Strickland said when he parted from you both."

"Oh, yes! That good boy, Walter! He remembers the sermon the old gentleman gave us—every word of it, I'll be bound. But I don't cumber my head with such stuff. Come, you'd better go over it again. I've forgot my lesson."

"It was not a very long one. 'There, my lads,' he said, 'I've done what I could for you—I've given you an education and the means to start in the world and get your own livings. Now mark what I say—henceforth I have done with you for good. I expect you to work like men, and provide for yourselves; and it will not be of the least use your ever coming again to

me. You'll think, maybe, because I'm rich and have been liberal to you, that you can bleed me whenever you will; but I tell you once for all, I'm not one to be bled. You won't get a stiver out of me, though you were begging in the streets. It will be all your own fault if you are so; and my money is for those who can't help themselves, and not for those who won't.' "

"Ha! ha! ha! I remember it, now you put me in mind, as if it were but yesterday. Why, Kate, it's as good as a comedy—you do it to the life. The worthy old curmudgeon! I verily believe he'd be as good as his word, though Walter, and you, and I, and the precious child to boot, were starving. Not one crumb of bread, not one halfpenny, would he give to save his soul. No, you're quite right—not the least use in applying to *him*."

"Then I repeat, what will you do?"

"And I repeat, there is one thing I won't do—stay as I am. Can't and won't—other people can play at can't and won't, besides the

all-powerful Mr. Strickland—and I'm one of them."

A sort of smothered sigh was the answer to this.

"Don't look so dolorous, Kate—surely it's no affair of yours."

"I don't know—I am not quite——"

"Pooh! you mean—I know well enough what you mean—you are afraid of your husband's money. Take care of the purse—oh, by all means take care of the purse! Study your gospel, too, though; and in one little corner or other, I've a notion it says something of this sort, 'From him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.'—Eh?"

"The devil can quote scripture," thought I.

"Ay," Paul went on—"you good, pious people, can be ready enough with your texts and your verses against us poor sinners, who neither make large the borders of our garments, nor widen our phylacteries, nor say long prayers; but when it comes to *your* turn—when the poor sinners come down upon you with a text upon

their side of the question—above all, a text that touches the purse—oh! then to be sure, we are not to interpret scripture literally—eh, Kate?"

"I do not think you are quite just, Paul. I do not think that you have found your brother—and I hope you have not found me—unwilling to come forward when we could be of any real service to you. But I believe we should be doing you a very ill turn if we encouraged you, by any hopes of assistance upon our part, to throw up the safe and respectable situation in which you were placed by Mr. Strickland. Believe me, situations are not so easily obtained as you may perhaps think. And many and many a young man would esteem himself fortunate indeed, if he could get such a place as yours."

"Many and many a young man!" mimicking. "Why, Kate, you really will grow old before your time, if you talk in such a sententious manner. Many and many a young man! why, that's quite a set phrase. Everybody says it to everybody, who does not particularly de-

light in an odious position. Many and many a young man!—very probably—but perhaps I'm not exactly like many and many a young man; and occupations may be suited to many and many a young man, that are not exactly the thing for me."

"Do not mistake me. I know you have talents — I appreciate your talents — but oh, Paul! do not let the precious gifts of God prove an injury and a snare, for want of a little common sense to guide them."

"Lavater has it, 'that genius is only the flower of common sense,' I would have you to know—and the guidance of the intuitions of genius is the guidance of a higher wisdom than you 'muckworms,'—shall I venture to call you so in the language of Milton,—or shall I say,—than you drudges are perhaps aware of."

"The light that led astray was light from heaven.—Ah, poor Burns! yet it did lead even *him* astray!—Oh, dear Paul! be wise in time. Be steady, be industrious—beware of expensive

habits. Fly from evil company—eschew debt—achieve a noble independence—and upon that basis build. You have genius—I know it—I know it; but ah, Paul! Paul! what is genius hampered with difficulties of this nature—bowed down with money obligations, the consequence of imperfect self-government—a prey to every passing temptation—dogged by evil habits—fettered by debts—ashamed to look the hardworking, prosperous toiler in the face; despised by men whose natural gifts are far inferior to his own! And why despised?—because their conscience tells them that they have triumphed over self—that they have laboured perseveringly and well in their vocation—in that portion of the Lord's vineyard where their task was allotted them.—Whilst genius! clipped of its glorious wings! degraded, miserable, and in rags! serves only to point a warning — when it ought to have been the brightest of examples."

There was a momentary pause after this outburst.

The response was, this time, in a less mocking tone.

"You talk of God—you hope and trust in God—you believe he interferes in the miserable concerns of this ridiculous life of ours?"

"I do believe it. It is my conviction—my rock—my hope."

"Happy!...Sometimes I wish *I* did—sometimes I catch myself wishing that I could feel as you do, Kate—that I were again a credulous child, or an equally credulous woman; but man, in the maturity of reason, finds it difficult to swallow certain dogmas."

"'To the Greeks foolishness, but to them which believe, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God,'" was the reply, with a certain genial glow in the manner of it.

There was another pause; then he began again,—

"You talk of a man's vocation—do you know what the word you use exactly means?"

"Calling—what a man is called to—does it not?"

"And how is a man to know what he *is* called to?"

"Why . . . ."

"Is there any voice to be heard calling us? I never heard but one voice, that of nature within me—and that calls loudly enough. It calls to me to break the chains that are eating away my life, and silently crushing down the aspirations of genius—to assert my liberty and self-action! to follow the instincts of my heart! to live to freedom and myself! to spurn the base, grovelling employment of a dirty, money-getting world—and dare to breathe alone for poetry and nature. That's my call, at least—yours may be different."

"You puzzle me as you puzzle yourself, I think, dear Paul—darkening wisdom by words without knowledge. Yes, I must own that the nature within us *is*, to a certain degree, a call—I acknowledge it. Walter and I are endeavour-

ing to obey that call, as regards our darling Fabian. But there is a higher call than this—the call of duty! and I think the circumstances with which we are surrounded are as the hieroglyphics of God, in which we are to read what *is* our individual duty... Yours, surely, dear Paul, is to maintain yourself, and to abstain from indulgences which your purse will not allow. No poetry, no gifts of eloquence, or fancy, or imagination, can exempt you from the primeval command, 'in the sweat of thy brow to eat thy bread.'"

"And yet numbers and numbers, every day, no better—not half so good as I am—are exempted from it?"

"It may be so; but what matters it, when you are not of that number."

"The more the shame, the more the pity!—a fresh instance in proof of how false, vicious, and tyrannical is the system of society. *Chacun selon sa capacité.* There's something like a maxim for you!—there's something like wisdom

in *that*, I take it, and a true perception of things—And I'll tell you this, if matters went on as they ought to do—as Nature with a loud voice cries that they *should* do, and as," lowering his voice, "some day or other they *will* do—Many, now in high places wearing their robes of scarlet and ermine, might be found behind the counter measuring filthy dowlas; and others, now wasting their energies in the dark corner of a narrow street, might be soaring aloft free to expatiate with Nature, and expound her mysteries to the world!"

"I can't tell—I can't answer you, when you talk in this way. All I know is, this is not the manner in which God has been pleased to order the world at present. He who assigns to every one his place—He, perhaps, can judge better than we, in our self-conceit and blindness, do, what *is* the situation best suited for each. Oh, Paul! Paul!—lose yourself not in these high flights. Dear Paul, condescend to that 'which before you lies in daily life — it is

the prime wisdom.' Believe your favourite Milton."

"Milton was a narrow-minded Puritan—great poet as he undoubtedly was. We see further into things now-a-days. Ah, my hero!—are you there?"

The young mother started up, hurried to the door, and opened it. A child's voice was heard in answer to her—

"My darling! Have you had a happy evening?"

"I've been as happy as a king, mamma. First, me and Amy walked to see Job, and we were to get strawberries first, and we did; and oh, mamma! I saw a tapestry bee, a real live bee, with a bit of red leaf in its bill. And then we went to Job, and he gave us strawberries; but he did not talk and tell much, because, you know, there was a gentleman—such a nice gentleman!" (excuse my vanity in putting that down: I was quite pleased with the compliment)—"and he came home with us;

and has he been here? because he run a thorn in his hand, trying to get at the tapestry bee's nest; for he likes about bees and insects, and was good-natured, too. He hurt himself very much. He said he'd come here — did he come?"

"Yes; but your papa is not at home; so the gentleman is in the parlour waiting for him. I am afraid his hand is very bad."

"I'm so sorry. May I go and see him?"

"No, you will disturb. him. But what did you do at Mrs. Grant's?"

"First, Amy made such a beauty dish of strawberries, all over flowers and leaves . . . and then we'd cream in Mrs. Grant's real silver, little, funny jug, with men half horses on it—are there such creatures?—I don't think so; and then we'd picture books, Amy and I—great, large, beautiful picture books . . but Mrs. Grant lets Amy turn them all herself, because she's so good and so caring. And so I'm come home all alone with Biddy, and it's been very pleasant indeed."

"And brought a cake in your pocket for mamma. But have you nothing to say to uncle Paul?"

"How do you do, uncle Paul?"

"You needn't uncle me. Call me Paul—*tout court* — but shake hands. Why, Fabian, you are growing quite a man."

"Aint I. I'm grown as big!—that much since last birthday."

"Well, you're a fine, jolly lad, any how. And so you've been flirting with Miss Grant, you young rogue, have you?"

"Don't, Paul, don't!" in a tone of disapprobation.

"Flirting! What, flirting?"

"Oh you'll know time enough; but we mustn't talk of such wicked things to little boys. Little boys mustn't be knowing, must they, mamma?"

"Oh yes, but I want to be knowing. I *will* be knowing. Papa's very knowing, and I will be like papa."

A loud, rough laugh answered this earnest speech.

"Better come to me than to papa, if he wants to be knowing—eh, Kate?"

"Better copy his father in everything. You are quite right, my darling. *Be* knowing, and like your papa—and now go to bed. Go round by the back door, dear, that you mayn't disturb the gentleman."

The child went away.

"Well, he *is* a fine fellow," Paul began. "It's a pity you make such a milk-sop of him. And so you intend to bring him up to be a regular M.D., do you? Ambitious designs, Mrs. Lewis! A scientific education will cost a power of money, and it will be years after he starts, in the higher walks—that's the phrase, is it not?—before he will be able to maintain himself. Other people can have lofty imaginings and aspirings, it seems, as well as I, 'though they thank the gods they are not poetical.'"

"It is to render our high aspirings for this

child just and rational that Walter labours and I spare. I own we *are* ambitious for him; but our ambition is, surely, a right one. We think he gives promise of first-rate ability. If it prove so, we mean to leave nothing undone to secure every advantage that can tend to the development of that ability: therefore, we look forward betimes. It is our only chance; for money does not come in very fast here. Surely, Paul, you must acknowledge that there is nothing wrong in *this* plan."

"Oh certainly not, according to your principles. For my part, I might, perhaps, wish that society itself took charge of her more valuable members, and left them not to the chances of parental caprice. Well, well, every one must ride their own hobby . . . but here comes your husband at last."

A horse, with slow, wearied step, was heard approaching the door.

A sort of labouring man appeared upon the garden side of the house, the horse was led away,

and the door was opened for Mr. Lewis by his wife.

"Dearest Walker! I am so glad you are come. How tired you look. There is a gentleman waiting for you."

"I am rather fagged. Did you say a gentleman was waiting for me? I hope, dear Kate, it is not a very difficult case; for really, I feel as if I had no sense left in me, I'm so wofully tired. Ha, Paul! what wind blows you here?"

"Take a glass of wine, my love. Sit down for one moment. I will step and see whether the gentleman is awake. I laid him down upon the sofa—for his hand—it's only a thorn in his hand, after all — was dreadfully swelled. Sit down a moment, and do take a glass of wine."

"And I'll pledge you," added Paul. "Kate's very stingy of her wine. She pretends three glasses at a time are as much as will do any man good; but I'll take a fourth, and a fifth too, if you say much, lady fair."

"Help yourself, Paul," said his brother; "I'm

glad to see you any way—but how come you here?"

"Oh, I've a long story to tell you, Walter; but it's between you and me, please."

Mrs. Lewis had by this time entered the little drawing-room; the last words I heard Paul utter were: "I'll not bother you with it now.—You are the most generous of fellows, and will help me, I know."

CHAPTER V.

"There she weaves both night and day
A magic web."

TENNYSON.

MRS. LEWIS entered softly, and came up to the side of the sofa upon which I lay.

"Have you been asleep, sir? I hope your hand is less painful."

"No, I have not been asleep; and, Mrs. Lewis, I have a confession to make to you. I could not sleep; and, having warned you that I was not asleep, my conscience was laid at rest; and as I lay still, I could not but hear a good deal of

what was passing. I hope, as the man says in the play, 'I did not intrude,' and that there was no great harm done."

"No great harm," she said, somewhat coldly; "perhaps it was not quite fair—but you *did* warn us."

"I did, indeed; and having done so, and as it was you yourself who left the door ajar, I was irresistibly tempted to listen. Indeed, whether I listened or not, I could not help hearing. I very seriously beg you to forgive me for the impropriety of which I have been guilty."

"Think no more of it," she answered cheerfully. "I came to announce that Mr. Lewis is arrived—will you see him, sir?"

"As soon as he has rested a little. I heard, among other things, that he was very much tired. Pray, do not let me hurry him."

In a short time after this, Mr. Lewis was introduced.

He was a man rather below than above the middle size—well made and well proportioned;

with a face refined and delicate, and with a mixture of firmness, gentleness, intelligence, and sweetness, in the expression, which was extremely pleasing.

I was interested by him in an instant, as I had been by his wife and child.

"I am afraid this will prove rather an awkward business," he said, after he had examined my hand. "The thorn was a prodigiously large one, and it is the thorn of an acacia, which leaves a curious sort of venom behind it. I wonder more notice has not been taken of the singularity; but the tree is not often used for firing in this country, and people are seldom exposed to accidents from the thorns. This is ugly. I am afraid, sir, you must submit to rather a painful operation. The thorn has gone right through the ball of the thumb, and has broken short off there."

"Well, of course, it must be got out. Can you set about it immediately?"

"Yes, I think it may be done. The swelling

is a good deal reduced. My dear, have a little sal-volatile ready. We shall want somebody to hold the hand. Paul, step here a moment."

And Paul entered.

He was somewhat taller, and still more elegantly formed than his brother; but the open, ingenuous sweetness of Walter's countenance contrasted strongly with the lowering, discontented aspect of that of the other Yet beneath this contracted brow it could not be denied that eyes of extraordinary depth of expression flashed and gleamed; the mouth, however, was sensual and ill-favoured: the character of the face, in short, unpleasant, though the features were handsome enough.

"Paul—step this way. I want you to hold the gentleman's hand firmly, whilst I perform a rather painful operation."

Paul, I fancied, looked somewhat sulkily inclined; nevertheless, he took hold of my hand with a pair of his own, not particularly clean or well kept, which looked the coarser and the

worse for being contrasted with the exquisite delicacy of those of my young surgeon and his nice wife.

The operation was performed with much care and skill. It was an extremely painful one, considering how trifling the accident had been. I am forced to own, that I fainted away twice, and felt so unaccountably ill, after it was over, that I scarcely knew what to do. I was thoroughly ashamed of my weakness.

I really could scarcely stand when I strove to rise, and was obliged to lay myself down upon the sofa again.

How to move was the next question.

"Something more than the hand will quite account for is the matter here, I think," said Walter. "Did you fall, sir, as you were climbing about after my little naturalist's bees'-nest? Your system seems more generally shook and deranged than the accident to the hand will justfy."

"Yes, now I remember, I had an awkward

sort of head-foremost tumble as I came down the bank again. It made the children laugh."

"Did you hit your head?"

"Yes, now you ask me, I have an impression that I did—but really, my hand began to ache so furiously, that I forgot everything else."

"I am afraid, sir, we must lay an embargo upon you for some little time. I think it would not be quite safe to move you even so far as to your inn—the King Charles, I presume. I think, if you will accept of such accommodation as we can afford here, it will be better."

I caught a glimpse of Paul's face as Walter spoke thus; the eyebrows raised and the shoulders elevated, with a look supercilious and amused;—rightly interpreted, it said,—

"Well done, brother—understand your business, I see. Don't meet with a gentleman patient every day. Make the most of him."

"But have you a bed to spare? There is your brother ——"

"Oh, pray, sir, don't cast away the remotest

thought upon me. I can accommodate myself in the cock-loft—in the barn—anywhere—can't I, Kate?"

"Or, rather," said she, "if this gentleman will allow of it, you can occupy his bed at the inn, and give up to him the one you usually have here. I dare say, sir, after a good night's rest, you will be quite yourself, and ready to resume your more comfortable quarters again."

"Just let it be as you please, if it be equally agreeable to Mr. Paul, whom I am sorry to put to inconvenience."

"No inconvenience to me, sir, thank you. I am not accustomed to study my own convevenience much, or to expect others to do so."

"Will you go to bed, then, immediately?" said Walter. "You had better; and we will keep the house perfectly quiet. I am anxious you should sleep. Kate, have the bed made ready; and, brother, stay till you have helped

me to assist this gentleman up stairs; then you and I will go down and sup at the King Charles, for really this is such a tiny bit of a place, that there is no keeping it still but by fairly emptying it."

"Be it so," said Paul; "I will betake myself to the surgery till such time as my services are required. I suppose it is forbidden to smoke a cigar within these sacred precincts?"

"Why, really, brother, you know we don't like it."

"Then, if you think good, I will go and smoke mine under the usual tree, and you will call me when you want me." And with that he took himself away.

Mrs. Lewis presently returned, saying my bed was prepared; and to a bed most comfortable, and a little chamber most sweet, and neat, and pretty, I was helped by my host and his brother. I was then undressed and laid down in bed, and had an anodyne draught given me; and I had no sooner rested my head upon my

pillow, than I fell fast asleep, and heard nothing more of them, nor of anything, until between five and six o'clock upon the following morning.

CHAPTER VI.

"Or the yellow banded bees,
Through half-open lattics
Coming in the scented breeze."

TENNYSON.

THIS small house had most inconveniently thin walls. It was as the palace of truth,—nothing could be concealed here—and, most unwillingly, I was obliged to share in another confidence which it was still more impossible to avoid than that of the day before, and this at a very early hour the next morning.

The rays of the sun shot through the little white dimity window-curtains; and, through the

casement, which had been left purposely open, came the rustling sound of leaves, and the singing and chirping of birds; and the lowing of herds, and sheep, and lambs, mingling with distant voices; and all the pleasant stir of a summer morning. I lay some time half awake, half asleep, listening to the cheerful harmony, in a state of agreeable drowsiness.

I indulged in this enviable, dreamy state some time, scarcely distinguishing one from another the sounds that came mingled in so agreeable a confusion. The house was as yet, to all appearance, still; but by-and-by, a murmuring of voices reached me, but proceeding from what place I could not for the life of me distinguish. The truth was, as I have reason to believe, that my ear must have been preternaturally sharpened by the state of my nerves, so that I caught the words distinctly, of what would otherwise have reached me only as an inarticulate murmur, and, in this instance, most innocently and unavoidably, overheard yet another conversation.

There was first a long indistinct discourse, of which I caught nothing; then I heard a low, sweet voice in reply.

"I do not quite agree with you, dearest Walter, but I am sure that what you decide upon will be wise and right."

"And I doubt very much, Kate of my heart, that anything in which you do not *quite* agree with me can be either wise or right."

"Ah! flatterer."

"Not very much of that—but, to own the truth, I have my misgivings myself; and yet—to urge a man of his abilities to continue drudging on in an employment at once so servile and uninteresting—so inconsistent with all the higher flights and aspirations of a soul like his, does seem to me, I confess, something bordering upon cruelty."

"And yet you drudge yourself."

"It is not exactly a parallel case.—In the first place, we do not resemble each other in many respects. I am far from possessing his

fine parts, for one thing. Moreover, my occupation is what I delight in—my drudgery is a labour of love.

"I doubt whether any labour would be one of love to Paul."

"Don't be severe upon him, dear child; you know it is hardly fair to measure him exactly by the same standard as other men."

"Perhaps not. But would it not be better if he did not think so much of that himself? Is it safe in this world to begin life with looking upon one's self as an exception—above and exempted from common rules, and the every-day virtues of prudence, forethought, and industry?"

"But it seems impossible to make him look at things in this way, which, after all, is perhaps rather an interested way. There are some mounting spirits that find it impossible to square their lives by selfish, or by what they think to be selfish, mere prudential, and therefore, in their estimation, base considerations."

"Selfish! base! to labour for one's own in-

dependence—to labour not to be a burden, but, when need arrives, to be a help to others!"

"Why, my love, that last is what, just at this moment, I was wishing to be."

"Ah! you well deserve that pleasure. Dear Walter, do me the justice to believe, that I would not have a word to say, did I believe that by your generous liberality you were forwarding your brother's real interests; but I doubt, I doubt."

"Of one thing, my dear, there cannot be a doubt, that to pen a genius such as he is behind a counter, measuring tapes and laces, is to put Pegasus into a dung-cart—he cannot, and he will not, draw."

"Ah! that *will* not . . . ."

"You would not have him do it? He *has* tried, poor fellow! he has been there eighteen months—but the confinement is irksome, is insupportable. He was made 'to hear the lark sing, not the mouse cheep,' as he says—indeed, my love, I cannot help sympathising with him."

"And well you may. You are a thousand times more of a real poet than he is."

"Who talked of flattering?"

"A real poet," she said, raising her voice, and warming as she spoke, "is not one who merely spins rhymes—he may never have made a verse in his life. No! he is one blessed with an eye to look far into the hidden, secret beauty of things, one, whose ideal is lofty, noble, and most precious, because it is just—because it is true wisdom in its finest development—goodness in its loveliest form. The true poet sees better than other men—knows better than other men—feels better than other men—should *be* better than other men—but that poet is not Paul, but Walter."

"And if Walter be all these fine things, then believe, love, that his sympathy with Paul arises, probably, because in his secret soul he sees, knows, and feels, as a poet can scarcely help feeling."

"Ah, Walter! do as you please—do as you

think best. I will never, never contradict you. Perhaps you are right—perhaps there is in Paul what you say, though I confess I cannot see it—but you are his brother; you must understand each other as only children of the same blood can do. But to return to our *moutons*. What does he purpose to do?"

"To get released from Mr. Howish, and obtain some other employment."

"Two difficulties to begin with—how is he to get released from Mr. Howish? and how is he to obtain some other employment? I am afraid that every employment in which he has to cross his own inclination will be alike distasteful to him...and what employment is there to be found in the world in which a man does not find it necessary, more or less, to cross his own inclination?"

"There are differences in degree, as you will admit, at least. And really one can scarcely imagine any employment in the world less calculated for a young man like Paul, than to stand behind

the counter of a large shop in the heart of the City, where the sweet breath of heaven and the very rays of God's blessed sun scarcely enter. I cannot think how good Mr. Strickland could think of putting him there. It certainly was a great mistake."

"Why, you know, dear Walter, say and do what Mr. Strickland would, he never could get Paul to apply. I believe he promised him over and over again—seeing that he was a boy of talents above the common order—that he would place him in some occupation either belonging to the law, the church, or medicine, that would give scope for the employment of his faculties—if he would but apply and render himself fit for it. But you know nothing *would* induce Paul to set seriously to work—to labour—drudge, if you will, as people must labour who hope to succeed. Nothing could persuade him to cross his inclination for wasting his time in vain, aimless wanderings, whether of mind or body."

A pause of a few seconds, but the husband made no answer. Kate went on. "He was unfit for any profession. Not pious enough for the church, not industrious enough for the law, still less calculated for medicine. He was excessively affronted when Mr. Strickland proposed the shop, assuring him that there he would be in the way of making himself independent, and might, as he added, write poetry as he went along. But what better could Mr. Strickland have done for him, though he might, perhaps, have expressed himself less sarcastically; but Mr. Strickland, we all know, has his peculiarities. Paul was more angry at the insult to his muse, as he called it, than at all the rest—don't you remember?—But really I think Mr. Strickland was not so very far wrong. The sort of mechanical occupation in which Paul is employed, allows plenty of time for thought. If he be a true poet, he will find inspiration visit him even behind the counter; and in the meantime, he has his salary, is inde-

pendent, and in the way to gradual advancement. Mr. Howish is an admirable man, so just, and kind, and generous,—Paul has such a pattern before his eyes, such a master to serve,—what a privilege! In serving him, Paul is serving a true servant of the Great Master."

"Very true, my dear, if Paul could but see it in the light that you do; but he cannot, and there's an end of it."

"But he *must*, for what is he to do?"

"That is exactly the question—what is he to do? A previous one, however, is unluckily already answered, what he will *not* do. Stay with Mr. Howish that he is resolved not to do."

"But suppose he must—oh! must is a wholesome word."

"Not one that Paul will endure. If I will not get him out of this scrape respectably, he threatens to break his pledge, make his escape, run away, and 'list for a soldier."

"Forfeit his word! his solemn engagement! Oh, Walter! Walter! this can never be—he

cannot be so dishonourable, so base—prove himself so utterly unworthy of all Mr. Strickland has done for him."

"It is astonishing how minds, acute as his, are able, by a perverted sort of reasoning, to dress up actions which, seen in their true colours, would disgust every right-minded man,—disguising their native deformity, so as to make very mean actions appear to their imaginations not only blameless, but praiseworthy. You should hear Paul enlarge upon the gifts he has received, upon the injustice to himself and others, of burying his talents in a napkin. He even quotes Scripture to justify himself—an authority intended to silence you and me; for I don't think he uses Scripture much to guide himself. However, the long and the short of it is, dear Kate, that Paul views the matter of breaking his engagements, and running away without paying the stipulated forfeit, in a totally different light from what you or I do. He says he stands absolved to his own conscience,

because it was taking a base, unfair advantage, upon the part of Mr. Howish, to exact such promise and forfeit; though, as you know, it is his established rule, and surely he has a right to lay down what rules he pleases, in the management of his own concerns—but Paul cannot, or will not, view it in that light; and I see plainly will not be withheld by any scruples. He harangues upon the duties man owes to himself and to society, and asserts that his first duty to both is, as he phrases it, to respect the image of God reflected in his own intellect and genius—He maintains that power abused, it is lawful to resist by every means that Nature has put into our hands—that Howish abused his power in the conditions he exacted—and that Mr. Strickland was a tyrant and an oppressor to suffer him to be bound by them; and so he arrives at the conclusion that if nobody will step forward to release him in the usual way, he is justified in breaking his engagement in his own way, and he ends, in short, by repeating the old threat,

that he will run away and 'list for a soldier. What is to be done with a reasoner like this?"

The wife was silent for a few minutes; then she said, "My dear Walter, if it be so, there is but one thing to be done—Mr. Howish must not be ill-used. Paul must not be allowed to act dishonourably—the forfeit must far rather be paid; and there is only one person to pay it, and that is yourself."

"My darling! my angel! my better angel! And that two hundred pounds so carefully and industriously laid by! and that life insurance that you refused to accept for yourself, that we might hoard all we could for the object so near both our hearts—the education of our promising little boy!—all to go!"

"Better anything than honour."

"Ah, my love! my treasure! my darling! It makes my very heart bleed to accept such a sacrifice from you."

"Oh! let us cheer up. Let us be thankful we have the means. I quite—quite see it. I

know Paul of old. He has, as you truly say, such a strange power of perverting reason, justice, truth, everything. He quite confuses one at times with what must be—what one knows—*is* sophistry; and how can we wonder that he convinces himself? Ah! it is a difficult task to reason any one out of their inclination—how impossible with such an ingenious sophist as Paul."

"But you—your boy—your self-denial—your forethought!"

"Oh! don't take it so. Work away cheerily, and I will work away cheerily. We shall soon make it up. We must give up the idea of help in the surgery this year: I must be 'poticary's boy still, and there is not a cuter in Christendom, I'll be bound, though I say it that should not say it; and you must jog it away still upon old Nell—rather a discreditable steed, because her very mane tells the story of a not very flourishing practice; but we *shall* flourish, mane or no mane. We'll soon make it up—such a clever man as you

are, Walter!—and the child is not five—Four or five good years yet, before we need think of sending him to school; and we'll manage some way, so that he shall not lose time. When we've got somebody in the shop, I shall have leisure to teach him myself, and you'll begin his Latin; or we'll get Miss Priestly to give him a lesson, if we're not rich enough to send him to school for this next three or four years. Dearest Walter, forgive me if I made difficulties. I would have done anything in the world to prevent this fatal step, if possible; but if it can't be prevented, there is but one way left—we must lose everything, *fors l'honneur*."

* * * *

I had slept like an infant; but it was partly owing to the draught administered, which did its office blandly and well.

I had, however, awakened early, as I said, and the conversation I had overheard had excited me in quite an unreasonable manner.

What between rage and admiration, I was quite in a ferment: my pulse began to gallop at a furious pace, and my hand to pain me extremely.

Mr. Lewis knocked gently at my door.

"Who's there?—I am awake. Come in!"

"How have you slept? You look flushed and hurried. Has anything come amiss? I hope you have not been disturbed.—"

"Oh! no; but my hand is certainly very painful."

"You are an excitable subject, sir, I see. You must keep yourself as quiet as you can."

"I am not a very strong person—I never was. My enemies call me delicate. I have worked hard to walk off this delicacy—I thought I had succeeded."

"Not altogether, I am afraid. The wounds look ugly. It is astonishing what ill consequences sometimes result from apparently very trifling accidents. I would advise you to keep your bed for to-day."

"But what a bore I shall be to you!—and what a bother it is to stay a whole day in bed!"

"A greater bother to be laid up for a week; and this is what you will have to submit to, and I will not say what more, if you do not keep quiet to-day. It will prove far the shortest method in the end. Mrs. Lewis will bring you up some breakfast; and we will make you as comfortable as circumstances will admit."

"But I fear I shall inconvenience Mrs. Lewis very much."

"She is not easily inconvenienced. She will do the best she can. I am only sorry our accommodation is no better."

"Oh! what are you talking of?"

"Shall I open the window a little more? The room is close and small."

"By all means—thank you."

And he pushed the casement window wide open, and in rushed the sweet air in volumes.

The casement was not two feet from my bed. As I lay upon my pillow, I could look out upon

the fresh and delicious scene that spread out before it—the charming green of the garden and the lovely champaign beyond.—

Mr. Lewis applied the necessary dressing to the wound, which I confess looked astonishingly ugly; and then he went down stairs, and presently I heard Nell come out of her shed of a stable, and the young surgeon mounted and rode away.

Directly afterwards, Mrs. Lewis appeared with my breakfast, carrying it upon a little waiter covered with a napkin,—everything exquisitely neat and clean.

I forgot to say that Mr. Lewis had himself smoothed my bed, and shook up and arranged my pillows, in a way most comfortable to me.

The breakfast tasted to me delicious; the tea so nice and good, the bread and butter so sweet—

"This is all you are to be allowed to-day," said Mrs. Lewis, as she set down the small waiter upon a round table by the side of my

bed; "to-morrow I hope to mend your diet a little."

"What on earth can mend this? Pray don't stand waiting—I can't bear to see you standing. Won't you sit down?"

"No, thank you, sir. I am rather busy this morning; so, if you will give me leave, I will leave your breakfast, and come again in a few minutes, in hopes you will take another cup of tea."

"May I have the other window open?"

There were two: the room was at the corner of the house. There was one casement opening into the garden, the other to the little public square.

"There is no objection, if you will not have too much air, or be disturbed by the noises of dogs and children—though it is pretty quiet at this time of day."

"Such noises will only amuse me."

"Will you not like to have a book?"

"Very much indeed. What books can I have?"

"We have no very great choice. Mr. Lewis's books are chiefly upon professional or scientific subjects. I could borrow a novel, perhaps, from Mrs. Grant."

"Oh! I will not give you the trouble. Mr. Lewis is a great botanist, I think I have heard. I want to know something of botany myself. Have you any book for a beginner?"

"I will endeavour to find what will suit you!"

I looked at her face all this time, endeavouring to discover the traces of anxiety or vexation. But there was nothing of the sort to be seen. There was, perhaps, a little more gravity than the evening before—that was all.

She presently returned. Her little boy was following on tiptoe behind her, looking extremely good, and careful not to make the least noise.

"I have ventured to let Fabian bring you the book," she said: "he wished so much to do something for you, because you were hurt in your great good nature about his bee."

"Come in, my little fellow. Thank you for the book. This will do quite well."

"Is your hand very bad?" said the little boy, coming to the bed side, with much feeling in his childish face. "I'm so *very* sorry."

"Oh! it will soon be well; but I'm vexed we did not get the bee."

"I don't mind the bee, now. It's made you bad. I'm *so* sorry."

"Thank you. And what are you going to do with yourself to-day, my man?"

"I'm going first to school—see, here are my books in my little bag, mamma gave me; and then mamma says Amy and me may go to Job, and beg him for a little basket of strawberries. I know who it's for, but I mustn't tell *you*."

"Oh, don't tell me, by any means—I shall so enjoy some strawberries."

"Very well then, I'll make haste to school and be a good boy, and then Job'll give me plenty for you, if I tell him what a bad hand you've got, and how good-natured you are."

"You chatter-box," said his mother, re-entering the room, "you will tire the gentleman."

"No madam, he amuses me. He's a very nice sharp little boy."

"Do you hear that, Fabian?" said his mother, who seemed always upon the watch to prevent him receiving any evil impression.

"He says I'm a nice, sharp boy, mamma; and I'm sure I am."

"Then remember and keep so. To be nice, you must be kind and obliging; to be sharp, you must be industrious, and mind what you are about."

And so they went away, and I could hear her in the next room, putting on his little hat and pinafore, and washing his hands, and many kisses and laughs, and merry jokes, passing between them—next his little joyous hop was heard down each stair, and then his shout of delight as he spied Amy at a short distance, coming to meet him—lastly, I heard the "great,

big kiss" given to his mother; and away he went, the door of the house was shut, and all became as still as slumber, for I will not say death: it was not in the least like the stillness of death.

CHAPTER VII.

"Waver'd aloft, o'erburden'd but to fall,
To flutter in the miry ways of life."

W. C. Bennett.

I took up my book and began to read a most charming introduction to botany, written by that enchanter in language, Rousseau. It is enough to tempt any one to enter that portal of knowledge—I was quite bewitched by it.

Nevertheless, the charm could not prevent me interrupting my lecture from time to time, to look out into the garden, which was so sweet and fresh-looking—neatly kept though not with

any particular fancy or marks of unusual attention—the good missis being too busy to have much time to bestow upon it.

Everything remained perfectly quiet for more than an hour. At last I heard a small gate at the further end of the garden open, and a young man entered.

I soon discovered that it was that genius and poet, Paul.

He was dressed in a rather fashionable morning costume: at least his coat, which, to my somewhat experienced eye, was evidently the cut of an inferior hand, was vulgarised by an attempt at the extreme mode of the day, which was, of course, exaggerated, and, to a nice eye, caricatured. The waistcoat, lower clothing, and all the rest of it were in the same taste, and were in keeping with the lounging, easy, somewhat affected gait of this wonder of the world, who came sauntering on with his hat placed jauntily upon one side of his head. In short, there was that *je ne sçais quoi* of vulgarity in his

whole appearance, which one detects in an instant, but cannot exactly define—that vulgarity, in its quintessence, which proceeds from affectation, pretension, and ignorance of good manners, combined.

In describing his appearance the night before, I forgot to notice his *Henri Quatre* upon the chin, which, surmounted by the cigar he was now smoking, gave the finishing touch to my disgust.

But I really had taken such an aversion, reasonable or unreasonable, to Master Paul, that I was not an equitable judge. Probably he did not appear half so insupportable to other people as he did to me. I am such a terrible hater of some descriptions of persons and things.

I was half mad with rage and disgust, as I saw him come strolling up the little garden, with his ineffable air of self-complacency, puffing away at his cigar, negligently stooping, from time to time, to examine a flower, or affectedly raising his genius-lighted eyes to heaven. Finally he

settled himself down upon a garden seat just in view, and sunk into a comfortable half doze.

The irritation thus produced did my hand so much harm, that I was at last fairly obliged to turn away and endeavour to fix my attention upon my book; but it was in vain—that odious phantom pursued me.

And he, all the while dozing away so at his ease in the sun, enjoying the sweet May morning, as if May mornings were made for such as him!

Presently I heard him give voice.

"Biddy, pray what o'clock is it?" as the girl entered the garden for a little parsley.

"Going upon one, sir."

"Biddy, my dear, come here. When will there be luncheon?"

"There's no regular luncheon, sir, as you know, in this house. Missis takes a bit of bread, if she happen to want it. Master Fabian takes his dinner to school with him."

"Biddy, my soul savoureth the idea of a crust

of bread; but that dry crust requireth something wherewith to wash it down. Hast such a thing as a drop of brandy, or maybe gin, in thy kitchen, to flavour a mince pie or make pudding sauce, eh?"

"My stars, sir! why Missis would not let there be a drop of brandy in the house, except in the surgery, for anything."

"There *is* brandy in the surgery, then, Biddy? I'll be bound you know by experience how that said brandy could be got at, upon an occasion of life or death, let us suppose."

"No, sir, that I don't, nor never did. It's kept locked up. I don't know what you mean sir."

"Why, I mean, Biddy, that I suppose if a fellow-creature, or even yourself—poor, fragile Biddy!—were dying for a drop of the good creature, you could get at it, eh! dear?"

"I'm sure I couldn't; and as for myself, sir, I'm none so frage—what do you call it? But

I'm an honest girl, and never had a drop of brandy between my lips since I was born. No, I hadn't, and I wonder you're not ashamed to talk in such a fashion to a poor girl like me, sir."

"Immaculate Biddy! I beg your pardon; but needs must, and the need is great with me .... so, to cut the matter short, Biddy, if you can't get a poor suffering fellow-creature a little brandy and water out of the surgery—why—you must get it from somewhere else, that's all; for the long and the short of it is, I am perishing for want of some—and will have it."

"You're at your old tricks, sir, I see; but I won't never do such a thing for you no more. Missis will find me out, some of these days, and I'll lose a good place for it, sir."

"High principled, disinterested creature!"

"I wish you'd be civil, and not call names."

"I will, so thou wilt minister to my need. Here, Biddy—here's half-a-crown. Get me a

tumbler of cold brandy and water—pretty stiff, mind—smuggle it in for me, in through that convenient wicket at the bottom of the garden there, put the surplus pence in thy pocket, and mum's the word."

"You're a very naughty young man, sir, and you'll come to no good at last, that I'll be sworn."

But I heard her go down the garden, and out by the little back gate.

I began to feel my hand growing very bad. Anger always particularly disagrees with me.

I turned my face from the window and endeavoured to give my attention to Rousseau and his botany in vain. By the sort of fascination which vexation exercises over us, my eyes, in spite of myself, turned to the window again, from which I beheld my young gentleman still smoking his cigar with much apparent complacency. Presently appeared Biddy again upon the opposite side of the fence, looking stealthily round her, before opening the gate which led up the garden walk. She had

something in her hand covered over by the end of her shawl, which, upon seeing the coast clear, she produced, and displayed a large tumbler of very dark-coloured stuff, which I concluded was the brandy and water required.

"I didn't get it from the King Charles," said she, "fear Mrs. Tilley should be hasking questions. I went down street, to the Cat and Fiddle—they make no bones there—it's that's kept me so long."

"You did excellently well, so here's to your good health, fair Biddy."

"Bless you, drink it off and make haste! Missis may be here in no time, and catch us."

"It's rather ordinary stuff they sell at this same Cat and Fiddle, I see; but never mind—stimulus is everything—the form in which it is administered, a mere trifle to the true philosopher. Here, Miss, take the glass—not left a drop for you, 'cause of perverting your morals, you see."

"My morals! It would be as well if some folks looked after their own," remarked Biddy, pertly.

And so saying, she left the garden.

The young man whistled, took out a rather handsome cigar case, struck his light, lighted a fresh cigar with due care and deliberation, settled himself once more comfortably upon the garden seat, drew a newspaper from his pocket, and began to read.

This newspaper being left behind upon his departure, I had an opportunity of ascertaining the nature of his studies.

I am not quite sure that I recollect the title accurately, but I think the paper was called the *English Freeman*. It was a compound of pernicious stuff. Filled with rash and ignorant assertions, supported by most shallow, inconclusive reasoning, but couched in language sufficiently correct and good,—nay, at times, approaching to the eloquent. It was evidently written with design to ensure a wide circulation,

by flattering the vanity and ministering to the worst passions of that class from whom it was expected to find readers—to the pride and presumption of ignorance, to the obstinacy and self-conceit of indolence, to the selfishness which pervades human nature—false in its premises, absurd in its conclusions, but sophistical and plausible. It was exactly calculated to mislead the ignorant and the self-sufficient—self-sufficient through their ignorance. It was admirably suited to the imperfect moral calibre of those addressed, and especially adapted to nourish that belief—to which man is so prone, and of which he is so fond—that success is not the natural reward of persevering and laborious industry, self-denial, and skill, but the result of accidents of birth, or position, or else bestowed by favouritism, injustice, and tyranny: assuming, as a matter of course, that the *tried* are inferior to the *untried*, and that every man who does nothing, only wanted opportunity to do better than any of those who actually effect something—a conclusion

most acceptable to every man's self-love, and particularly to that of those who have not yet found opportunity for displaying their powers—or rather, I should say, making their want of ability evident—a theory which only a year or two gone by—in the Revolution of 1848—was put to the proof, as if to exhibit the full force of its absurdity, moral and intellectual.

How easy it is to declaim, and how difficult to act! How pleasant to sit by and abuse those who have to act! Every one knows how agreeable and how easy it is to rate oneself as wiser, better, and more capable than those who have laboured a thousand times more than we have!—But I am getting into a passion, instead of telling a story. Excuse me; I have done.

About an hour had now elapsed, which had been spent by my young man now in studying his newspaper; now in silent abstraction, smoking his cigar, sometimes lifting up his eyes—a very handsome pair, by-the-bye—to heaven; some-

times tracing figures upon the walk with an elegant little cane which he carried in his hand.

At last the wicket was heard again to open; he turned round, saw his brother, Walter Lewis, enter the garden, and rising, sauntered carelessly down the walk to meet him.

I had not heard Nell return to her stable. I think I must have been dozing or sleeping a part of the time.

"Come back!" exclaimed Paul; "I thought you had ridden out to Moreton-in-the-Marsh, and would not be home till dinner-time."

"I had gone about half-way, but something came into my head, and made me think better of it. I wanted to have a little talk with you, and I did not wish to lose time, as I hope you are going to return to London by the night coach, so as to be ready for business to-morrow morning."

"I! I was not thinking of it."

"But, my dear Paul, what are you thinking

of? You are absent without leave, as it seems; you will get into difficulties; you will get disgraced—dismissed."

"Disgraced! I rather defy a haberdasher, however long his counter, to disgrace me. Dismissed! I wish to Jove he *would* dismiss me."

"Paul!"

"Well, what is there so very bad in *that*, that you put such a saint-like face of abhorrence on?"

"I have been thinking all the way as I rode along, upon what you were saying last night; and the more I reflect upon it, the more vexed and annoyed I feel. You cannot be serious, brother, in either the resolution you declared openly then, or the design you insinuate now. You cannot intend to defy all the laws of honour and good principle, by running away from your indentures; or, what would be almost worse, designedly getting rid of them by such a course of conduct as will make your master content to

forfeit the bond, so he can but have done with you. Paul, our father was only a labourer, but he was an honourable and virtuous man—honourable as he was hard-working. What would he have said if he had heard a son of his trifling with—for I will not use the word entertaining—such base and disgraceful ideas?"

"And pray what did our father get, by his honourableness and his virtuousness, and his hard, unceasing labour—I'd be glad if you'd tell me that."

"Get!"

"Ay, get!—Get's the word. I'm not a fool to be caught by fine phrases, such as they use to throw dust into the eyes of that poor, tame beast, the people of England, and lead it where they will. I ask you what did my father *get* by all these fine things?"

"Get!"

"You won't answer me, because you can't. Then I'll answer myself—he got a stone hovel, with three rooms in it—and pretty nearly

enough of bread, when corn was not too dear, to keep body and soul together, and a bit of bacon for a treat, and a pint of small beer or so to wash it down, maybe, and the blessing of a rheumatic fever caught working out in the rain, and a wife dead of consumption. That's what he got by his honour, and his virtue, and his industry; a conclusion devoutly to be wished truly."

"A conclusion! how you talk! He has found his reward."

"Oh! virtue is its own reward—sophism of priests to delude credulous man!"

"Truth of God, to strengthen and ennoble man! But if you must needs talk in this wild and incoherent manner, it would be well to remember, that if my father had not unfortunately died early, he *was* in the way—and there is every probability that he *would* have reaped the reward of his good conduct, even in the substantial pound and pence manner, for which you seem alone to value it. You know that he had

already obtained an advance of wages; and that merely on account of his steadiness and trustworthiness he was put at the head of the gang as overseer. The confidence placed in him was such that he might have risen to almost any place, I was told; only, you know, he could neither read nor write."

"And you don't call that a scandalous, burning shame upon them? Such a man as he, not even taught to read or write!"

"Scandalous shame! and upon whom?—Upon his parents? Why, they knew no better, poor old folk! themselves."

"His parents! no, but a shame and a disgrace it is, that one man should be kept grovelling in ignorance, whilst others, infinitely less worthy, are reaping every advantage that the lights of the world can offer."

"I suppose they pay for such advantages —my poor father had nobody to pay for him."

"Scandalous! execrable!"

"But who was scandalous? Who was execrable?"

"Everybody who has a hand in trampling man down into the mire of this vile ignorance."

"Granted to the full, if they do trample them down; but I never knew anybody who trampled my father down. Nay, he was offered a place at Mrs. Lomas's school, but he never went, because poor grandfather sent him to frighten crows."

"Infamous!"

"But whose fault was it?"

"Whose?—Whose?"

"Yes, whose?"

"Why, you put things so, there's no answering you. But it's the fault of Society. Man has a *right* to instruction. It is his birthright as a moral and intellectual being."

"And who has he a right to make teach him for nothing?—It's a troublesome job now and then."

"Nonsense! I'm not talking of his making

somebody teach him for nothing. Society ought to take it upon itself."

"Who is Society?"

"What absurd nonsense you do talk, Walter. Society is an abstraction; everybody knows that."

"I should be sorry to look to an abstraction for payment for my drugs and winter rides."

"Pooh! how you run away from the question!"

"Well, when people argue, the opposite speaker always talks nonsense. Do not, however, mistake me; I am very, very far from saying that the Community—which is, I suppose, what you mean by Society—has not an important duty to discharge, as regards its weaker and more ignorant members. I do not mean that it is not entirely right to assist in providing education for those who have not the means of obtaining it,—bread for those who have lost the power to earn it for themselves—help to incapacity, and aid to misfortune—but what I *do* mean to say is, that

these things, when given, constitute a bounty, and not a claim. Justice, truth, and good faith, every man *owes* to another—every man has a right to claim these from another; but the fruits of one man's labour as a free gift, no man, however great his need, has a right to *claim*. I have no *right* to another man's benevolence and assistance; he may be a brute to deny it to my wants, but that constitutes for me no claim. And it seems to me, that your new-fangled gentry want to fasten a *claim* upon other men for that which never was yours, namely, the fruits of the industry, ability, or enterprise of other people. You are too proud to accept it as an alms,—too idle, or have too little capacity to earn it for yourselves; therefore you want to establish a *claim* upon it,—to take it and use it as rightfully your own, without saying with your leave, or by your leave, to the proprietor. I wonder how you'd like this yourselves!.....But you are an idle, poverty-stricken race, and have little sympathy with the

rights of property, because you have none. Get something first of your own, and then we'll begin to discuss your theories about giving other men the right of spending it for you."

"Bah—bah—bah! Why, Walter, you are becoming quite an orator. We shall have you holding forth at some club of good fellows, belonging to the respectable old school, whose chief occupation is the hoodwinking of society. But I tell you this old world stuff won't do now—it has had its day. The progress of society....."

"Well, we have discussed society and its sins long enough for one while; let us return to the matter in hand. My dear Paul, you are a very clever, imaginative, intellectual fellow, we know that, all of us, very well; but you've been a sad idle dog, you must confess. If you had not wanted common industry, you would not be where you are now. I quite enter into your feelings—believe me, that I do. You feel, you think, a capacity within yourself for something above

your present employments. I can quite understand that—it is natural enough; but in the first place, I would have you seriously ask yourself whether you are really capable of a higher species of occupation? To get a living in the higher walks of life, requires study, and good hard study, too; and that you never would give, and I doubt whether you would buckle to now. Just look the matter fairly in the face. One thing is indispensable to every man of spirit,—to maintain himself independently. Without independence, what is a man—what can he ever be? Half a man,—no man,—a slave! and in the worst sense of the word slave—the very soul within him a slave."

"Slave! I'm sure no negro slave is more completely a slave than I am at this moment! —Soul!—pretty independence of the soul,—measuring out book muslin for ten consecutive hours of every day!"

"I doubt whether it matters very much *how* we gain our bread, provided we get enough of

it, and do our work honestly and honourably. One species of toil is probably nearly as irksome as another. I dare say we should find it so if we tried. Every man in an hospital thinks his own bed the hardest. The essential is to get one's living, and I see at present no other way in which you can earn yours so securely and easily as your present one—for look ye, brother, you, who think time for thought, for composition, for the exercise of your poetic talent, so precious, if you will examine the thing properly, you will find you have actually much more opportunity for this, working as you do a limited number of hours—measuring out book muslin, if you will—than if you were wearing your brains to rags and tatters in an attorney's office. Now, when work is over, you can amuse yourself with the cultivation of your talents as you please—your brain is not exhausted—intellectual labour becomes the highest of pleasures after the fatigue of mere manual employment—whereas, even I, though I *have* the

felicity of riding Nell, and hearing thrushes sing in hedges, often come home so wearied, and my head so full of anxiety for this patient or the other, that when work is over I could not spin a line—no, not, I verily believe, if I were Homer himself."

"You don't suppose I envy *you?*"

"No, I should think not. You'd not like my bed better than your own if you tried it—though I like it well enough myself, if I must own the truth."

A smile of contempt rewarded this little effusion.

"Well, to come to the moral of all this long palaver, be a good honest fellow, Paul—you know you are so at heart—go back to your place."

"Master, you mean."

"Master, if you like, it makes no odds—Apologise for transgression; make your peace, work away, save your money, and let us have for a Christmas book a little volume of choice

poems that will immortalise you in your generation."

"Well, I don't know. What you say looks something like sense—but if I do go back, like a good boy, this evening . . . . I—I—I . . . . I've a little thing to tell you, Walter . . ."

"What is it?—out with it."

"Why, I've got one or two little bills for cigars and so on; and then my tailor—he is a tiresome fellow—never will give above twelve months' credit. I vow I don't know how money goes; but there are so many odd things one wants money for in London. You couldn't lend me twenty pounds, could you? I'll strive to pay it back by instalments."

Walter shook his head.

"I am afraid your instalments won't be very regularly paid, and I am sorry you do not make a point of living within your means; but if you will be a good boy and go back to your muslins, we'll see whether we can't scrape together twenty pounds or so, for once in a way—Dear

Paul—for once in a way—forgive me for saying that, not on account of the money—though, of course, the money is something to me—but the evil habit. Dear lad, if we do not begin life well—if we do not start at once in the right path—the world is a sad wilderness!—But I've lectured you enough for one while. Come along, you'll start by the seven o'clock coach. You'll be in town time enough to get two or three hours' sleep, and be at your place when shop opens to-morrow. Paul, dear Paul," looking at him with eyes beaming with affection, "you don't know how you please me, lad. Be a sensible fellow, such as you are at this moment," slapping him upon the back, "and we'll see if you are not a celebrated man, some time."

I took my pocket-handkerchief from under my pillow. I could not help it — the tears would stand in my eyes. Paul seemed affected. I saw him turn his head away. I saw him, too, steal out his pocket-handker-

chief, as if ashamed of his emotion—but he said nothing.

He was off that evening by the coach, and the whole house seemed the lighter and brighter when he was gone.

CHAPTER VIII.

"'Twas a sweet smile—so full of human love,
Of gentle tenderness and kindly heart."

W. C. Bennett.

The consequences of my accident were such that I was detained at Ashurst some time.

I sent to Mrs. Tilley and gave up my apartments at the King Charles, and agreed with my sweet Mrs. Lewis to be her lodger and boarder till I was quite well again.

I was not sorry for the necessity of this pause in my vagrant, objectless life. I had fallen into intimate communication with a class of society with which I was little acquainted,

and had become intimate with two or three individuals who not only engaged my esteem by their worth, and my affection by their kindness, but amused and interested me by the simplicity of their habits, and the interest I took in their domestic politics. When I was able to leave the house, I strolled about with my arm in a sling, watching the goings on of this little out-of-the-way place. I visited the blacksmith's forge almost every day. There is a fascination to me in seeing the huge bellows play, the sudden blazing up of the transient flame—in watching the red-hot horseshoe on the smithy—in hearing the hammer fall and seeing the bright sparks fly. Then the blacksmith's shop is usually the rendezvous and club-house of the village; where, when the labour of the day is over, or even at any hour of the day, when horses are waiting to be shod, there is sure to be a squad of village politicians, in their smock frocks, assembled, discussing the news of the hour, the prospects of the markets, intermingled

with plenty of gossip about their neighbours—a commodity of which men, I observe, are quite as fond as their wives.

At this place of assembling I learned a good deal more of humble life, its wants, its aspirations, and its energies, than ever I had done before; and this remark I must make by the way: I was never tired of admiring the plain, unsophisticated good sense of these labouring Englishmen. Whether it arose from their wholesome, out-of-door employments—whether it was that their brains were not confused and bothered with the metaphysical notions of our day—more plain, straight-forward, good sense—more of that good sense, which consists in men understanding what they are about—what ought to be done and how to do it—did I never meet with, than I heard at the blacksmith's forge of Ashurst. I don't say, as the false, canting flatterers of the common people are wont to say, that these men were just as well calculated as Lord Aberdeen, Lord Derby, Lord

John Russell, or Sir Robert Peel, to govern a nation, and direct the complicated relations of a world; but this I do affirm, that in their own circle they, many of them, saw as clearly, worked as wisely, and judged as well, as men of the brightest intellect could have done. In their special vocations, they were as apt and as acute as the best. I am speaking of the steady and well-behaved portion of the community, for such were chiefly those who frequented this little place of meeting. The dissolute ones sought out other places of diversion, the low pot-houses, for instance, where they muddled away their senses with drink, and destroyed their morals with profligate conversation.

How often have I thought of that apt and beautiful illustration of society, when the preacher, looking round him upon the congregation assembled in a newly-opened village church, upon that day consecrated—compared his listeners to the materials of the newly-erected building, and said that each individual man, like

each individual brick, had his appointed place and his appointed use—that in the soundness and perfection of its less distinguished parts, lay the chief strength and stability of the building, rather than in the lofty arches and massive pillars, all so excellent and noble in their way.

He bade every one assist to build up the temple of society—in other words, the Church of God—by fulfilling the duties of his proper sphere — honourably and well — whether that sphere were small or great.

I thought this better sense than to tell men that they were all polished arches and massive pillars ; and entreating them to refuse their place in the walls, because they were not every one elevated to be the mainstay and chief ornament of the edifice.

Among other characters with whom I made acquaintance, I was introduced in due time to Mrs. Grant. I felt anxious to judge one who had reared so sweet a child as Amy, and I was not disappointed in her—but more upon that

subject hereafter. I must indulge myself now with a further account of the little family in which I was domesticated.

A more simple and frugal manner of living I had never seen.

In my various wanderings I had, to be sure, like the beloved Oliver Goldsmith, found a home under many a humble roof; but in none had I observed the domestic policy carried on with more exact frugality, comfort being at the same time consulted, and even liberality practised to such a degree.

Blessed effects of economy and order — of woman's nice perceptive taste and unremitting industry. "I study the æsthetics of bread and butter," said the best wife and mother I ever knew, one day.

Pretty, delicate, lively, ever active Mrs. Lewis! Though unacquainted with the word, she was equally alive to the thing.

That first element of comfort and beauty in small households, cleanliness and precise ar-

rangement, was carried out by her with almost a Dutch scrupulousness.

"There was not room in her little cabin," she used to say, laughingly, "for dust; and if things were not all in their place, where *was* she to find room for them, unless they encroached upon their neighbours? So I keep everybody under good discipline, you see. That is one advantage of these nutshells—one must be a careful housewife, or one cannot find room to turn oneself."

It had not required any great outlay of capital to furnish such a little place, and that necessity had been rendered still less by the choice of the materials — dimity curtains and rush-bottomed chairs, and green baize coverings for floors, and deal painted tables and chests of drawers; but the colours so well chosen, the draperies so prettily hung, all that did not cost money, so well done, that the effect was most cheerful and pleasing.

It was by attempting nothing above the sphere

of life to which they belonged, but by studying to fill up that little outline as completely and gracefully as was possible, that the harmony was produced which was to me so agreeable.

"We were forced to be excessively stingy," Mrs. Lewis told me, in one of our many conversations (for we soon became quite intimate and confidential friends). I *have* one social art, if I have no other, that of winning upon the confidence of those I frequent.

"We were obliged to be excessively sparing," said she, "when we first set out in the world; for you cannot conceive how little we had to begin upon. Our little savings, and fifty pounds besides, which was my own—being my share of my poor ruined father's property, after everybody was paid—was all."

After a short pause, which I spent in admiring this humble wisdom and self-denial, and reflecting upon how little is necessary to make two loving and prudent young people happy, Mrs. Lewis went on—

"It would have been vain we well knew, even if we had been willing, which we were not, to apply to Mr. Strickland for assistance. It was a rule from which he never deviated, to make all the young men he helped forwards clearly to understand, that having given them an education, and once started them in life, they were not to expect from him one farthing more, however pressing the necessity might be. It would hamper him in all his plans and proceedings, he said, if after having done much for a lad, it was to be urged as a reason for doing more. Besides, in his odd way, he used to add, 'I know you all very well for a pack of lazy rascals; and if you had the faintest hope of being able to fall back upon me, you would never learn to shift for yourselves.' He was right, I dare say; but, right or wrong, he held, and still holds, unchangeably to this point. And as for my husband, he thought him so right, and he felt so deeply grateful for what he had already done, that I believe if he wanted a morsel of bread to

save him from starving, he would have begged from door to door for it, and died of hunger if no one would relieve him, rather than have made application to Mr. Strickland. It was a point of honour with him—a debt due to gratitude he considered it—not to inflict upon so generous a benefactor the pain of a refusal.

"I don't know what Mr. Strickland said to our marriage. Most people called it dreadfully imprudent. All our friends and acquaintances were very angry; but we were both alone in the world—we loved each other, we felt that we together could brave everything; and besides, it is always an advantage to a young medical practitioner to be a married man. This idea reconciled my conscience to what I was longing in my heart to do,—begin the world and struggle and work for him. You see, sir, Walter is not a robust young man; he is, on the contrary, extremely delicate—he wants a vast deal of care—he cannot rough it as many a young surgeon does and can. His heart is as soft and tender

as his abilities are high and fine. He wants a friend—a woman friend—when he comes home worn out with fatigue, his heart perhaps bleeding for necessities that he cannot relieve, or suffering that he cannot ease . . . . pierced to the very soul by all the suffering and sorrow he is obliged to witness, it would not do for him to be obliged to seek for recreation in the society of a few jolly men friends—They would laugh at him, most probably, for not having long ago hardened himself against the sufferings he has to witness in the course of his profession, as good surgeons ought to do, say they."

"They say very wrong."

"I think so, sir; and it does my heart good to hear you express that opinion. Nothing is, I believe, such a real alleviation of the sufferings of a patient as tenderness and kindness on the part of his medical man; but it does not do for such a man—a man with a feeling heart—after he has been sympathising with anguish and sorrow, to come home to a dull, lonely lodging

—his spirits can't stand it—he wants refreshment—sympathy in his turn. The spirits of men like Walter are usually more delicate than those of other people; in short, such a one wants a wife, and the best he can lay his hands on. I am not equal to my husband in any respect; I wish, for his sake, I were a thousand, thousand times better than I am; but I love him, I have been used to work, and accustomed to do without things, and so, upon the whole, I thought I should suit him pretty well."

"I should think so. You are the very pearl of wives. If all women were like you, we should none of us be bachelors, as old Job says."

She laughed, and said—

"You would spoil me if you could, I see, and so would Job too, but I am not going to be spoilt. I know well enough how many things are wanting to make me such a wife as Walter Lewis deserves, but I am only the more grateful to him for being content with his bargain."

"Go on; you were telling me how you set about furnishing your house."

"Oh, sir! it would make you laugh to hear how we did consult, and calculate, and plan; how we saved here, and saved there, to squeeze the little plenishing out of our means. We were forced to seek for a small loan of money to purchase surgical instruments and a proper store of really good medicines, and that money Walter did not object to borrow. He considered it as capital fairly expended upon his stock in trade. He borrowed that without scruple, insuring his life for the sum till it was paid; it is all paid now."

And her face beamed with honest pride and joy.

"I observe you have no assistant in the surgery; you do all the business there yourself?"

"To be sure I do; it would be a great expense to get any one else to do it. It is very wrong to trust such things to an ignorant boy; a young man fit for the purpose must, to a cer-

tain degree, be well educated, he therefore requires and deserves a good salary. Even an ignorant boy eats meat, and we have not an ounce more than we like to eat ourselves, for you know we are both rather *gourmands*—but then we really do work hard. Nature must be supported, you know."

"And very good everything is."

"I should be ashamed of myself if it were not. It *is* a disgrace to a wife, whoever she be, if she does not give her husband a good dinner."

"I can't think how you manage it."

"Oh, it only requires care and pains, and a little experience added to that. Experience is no bad thing anywhere. My mother was an excellent manager, and from quite a child she used to bring me up to assist her and attend to such matters. She said a woman's glory was in her householding. She taught me all sorts of things. The delicate little dishes she used to make for my poor father when he was ill and

anxious, and had little or no appetite—they would have tempted Apicius—is not that his name in the Dialogues of the Dead?—Dear, good, wise mother, how much I owe to her!"

"Then you did not sit playing the piano, and learning French all day?"

"Not I. My mother, before we were so badly off, taught me some accomplishments at spare times—she said it was well for a woman to have them; but when my father fell into difficulties and became so poor and ill, they fell into neglect, . . . and it does not matter. I do not want them now, I am too busy to practise my music," laughing; "and when Walter comes home, he is too tired to feel much inclination for that sort of thing. We get books—books are so cheap now, everybody who will can get them. When we have time for it, he likes better to lie on the sofa resting, and to be read to, than anything else—I so like to do it—it keeps his mind up to what is going on in the world, and it improves mine. It

makes me a more fit companion for a man like him."

"But how do you manage about making up the prescriptions?"

"Why, sir, one thing I forgot to tell you, which I have to thank my dear mother for—she *would* have me taught a little Latin. Her father was a clergyman, and had taken a vast deal of pains with her, and she knew Latin. She said it was the universal language, and she had found it very useful, and that perhaps I might some time or other do the same, and experience has proved the truth of what she said. She taught me at spare moments, and I was rather a good child, and loved my book, so with a little instruction from Mr. Lewis, I can make up prescriptions very well."

"And your boy—what a promising, interesting child he is."

Her whole countenance lighted up, as it ever did, if but the name of her child were mentioned.

"Ah, sir, is he not? Is he not a *dangerously* nice child? We must not let him become an idol and a snare."

"I don't enter into these refinements, for my part. I hold that no woman can love her child too much; for, in spite of the fuss they make about mother-love, I know hundreds of women that love their children a great deal too little, for one that loves them too much."

"Ah, sir, you don't know the mother's heart, then!—the worth of it, or the naughtiness of it—the love, and the self-devotion, and the self-sacrifice—or the pride, the envy, the jealousy, the ambition, the temptation to despise every other consideration, when opposed to the interests and the advancement of a child."

"Well, there is little fear of you, I think, being either unjust or otherwise. You will be content to see your boy worthy and happy. You will not desire for him a sphere above the one he is born to."

"Shall I not? Ah, sir! you think too well, or

not well enough of me. I did not mean to say that a parent's ambition for a child was not right. I think all parents *ought* to be ambitious for their children—all good parents are. It is natural, whatever one is oneself, to wish a child to advance upon it. God has implanted that desire in every loving parent's heart. We wish to see our children wiser, better, happier, richer, greater than we are ourselves. But that very ambition may become a snare when we desire this so passionately, as Walter and I do for this boy. To see him a distinguished man of science—a great and celebrated physician—oh, sir! I think we would live on dry bread, and clothe ourselves in rags, to secure it."

"A very honourable ambition; I quite entirely sympathise with it."

"It would not have been so vehement, I hope and believe, if we had not both thought that we discovered in this child, young as he is, the promise of very superior abilities—we think he gives earnest of quite a singular genius

for that walk in life. I don't know . . . . but my husband says he cannot help fancying that Sydenham, or Boerhaave, or Décandolle, or Sir Humphry Davy, or Faraday, or Sir John Hunter, or Sir Astley Cooper, must, when they were little children, have been something like our boy. It is his opinion that the child is father to the man, and that the germ of future excellence is very early to be discerned."

"Men differ about this. Examples are found both ways,—Sheridan, for instance. But I suspect that a boy, because he is slow at his book, may be condemned as a stupid dunce, when a finer perception would discover the germs, as you call them, of future superiority under this very disheartening outside."

"Do you think we are right in believing our little boy to be naturally clever?"

"I believe you are very right, but I would not have you trust too much to natural genius. To attain superior excellence in the pursuits you mention, a good education is, now-a-days, almost

indispensable. There is so much to be learnt—such an immense progress has been made, that an intelligent and original mind may be wasting its strength and ingenuity to no purpose, making discoveries of things new to himself, for want of being acquainted with what has already been done, though known to the world in general."

"Ah, sir, that's just it! My husband prizes the advantage of a really good education for his boy, above every other earthly possession."

"And he begins by sending him to the common village school? Why do you not keep him at home, and teach him yourselves, rather?"

"Because he is too young, and we have not time. He is too young to be left to learn lessons by himself; his father's time is never at his own disposal, mine constantly exposed to interruptions. The child might learn a little quicker, and a little more, in spite of these disadvantages if taught by ourselves, perhaps, but he would not acquire the invaluable habit of

regular systematic occupation at certain fixed hours—the habit of doing what is to be done when the hour appointed strikes, as a matter of course, and a thing not to be dispensed with. At his age, at any age, we think habits of still more value than acquirements. Moreover, he is an only child, and he is a very sensitive, original, and exceptional child; it is wholesome for him to live with his fellows, to learn not to hold himself above them—to be enlisted into the common fellowship of his kind from a baby, if he is to work among them afterwards as a marked and distinguished man."

"Why, how right you are in your way of thinking; but how long is this sort of education to last?"

"Not very long, and that is what makes us so miserly. We want to lay by a little sum of money before that time comes, for, after it arrives, we shall have so much additional expense to provide for, that we are not likely to be able to spare anything to speak of. We

want to have a small sum in store beforehand to meet inevitable accidents, so that when once launched, Fabian's education may not be quite dependent on his father's length of life. It would be cruel, my husband says, to begin a course which would lift him above the ordinary career, and then not to be able to finish it. That might engender endless mortifications and discontents. He might be happy in the place his father occupies, if he never learned to anticipate a higher; but it would be, he will say, 'As if I were to be obliged to dig and to delve like my good father,' if after having given him an education such as we propose, he were obliged to sink back and spend his life in a little obscure village like this."

"And so you are become very miserly?"

"Indeed are we. I carry my sovereigns to the bank at Morton-in-the-Marsh, and in due time make my investments with a joy that really one ought almost to be ashamed of."

* * * * * *

To return to my Rose of Ashurst and her little friend. The two children seemed to be inseparable.—Their love for each other appeared to be strengthened by harmony of taste and opposition of character. But what seemed curious was, that evidently the little girl was the ruling spirit of the two, the enterprising leader, guide, and guardian of the other, and still cleverer child. She was the foremost in every enterprise, yet the most watchful and prudent in every difficulty, and perhaps the bravest in danger; though in any pressing moment of sudden terror, I have sometimes seen the character of the embryo man flash out, and that of the coward woman reveal itself. At such times, Fabian would at once become heroic, daring, and brave, whilst poor little Amy would run screaming away.

Amy was not only the guide of his life, but Fabian's careful instructress in letters too.

Being so much older, her progress in learning was far beyond his, and she was unremitting with

the pains she took in helping him forward in his lessons. At this task she laboured indefatigably. She laughed at him when slow, and she scolded him when idle or inattentive; but under all this assumption of authority, it was easy to perceive that a deep-seated sentiment of the most ardent admiration—a feeling almost approaching to adoration—was concealed. She looked upon him, it was evident, as a something far more precious than herself. In her value for him, all self-love was absorbed. It was such a pretty sight to watch this pair of children, that I was never tired of it. She seemed to regard him, and to expect every one else to regard him as a something above measure, rare and valuable, as one to whose development and improvement it was hers and every one's business to minister in every possible way. She thought herself a mere nothing, in comparison with him, as if she was born but to help and take care of him. And was it not pretty to see how the little embryo woman—the Eve in her

first innocence, made herself the slave, whilst she affected to be the tyrant of the infant Adam.

How often have I come unperceived upon them, sitting together on one of the high banks of that shady lane, of which they were both so fond—a bank of moss inlaid with violets and wild strawberry flowers—crouching side by side, upon one mossy cushion, like Shakspeare's two cherries, divided, but not parted, Amy's little round arm thrown around his alabaster shoulders; a book between them, her little finger pointing to the words, whilst he was murmuring his lesson. The stillness interrupted by many a merry, ringing laugh, and many a "Oh, you foolish boy!" "Oh, you stupid little boy!" when he blundered.

At other times, her hat fallen off, she would be flying after him in full chase of some insect, or scrambling through the bushes to track some bird to its nest. Every object in nature seemed to be a source of investigation and delight, nothing came amiss to them.

One day I caught them tenderly nursing a poor wounded frog that they had picked up; at another time they were amusing themselves with a snake. I was afraid of vipers, but my little friends were far too good naturalists to run any risk of this sort, and pointed triumphantly to the golden spot upon the side of the reptile's head, as a warrant that he was harmless.

They were two little angels, and the whole village seemed to be of that opinion. They were looked up to and loved by every one. They were regarded as something more sacred, more holy, more blessed than other children; as the cherubim, the messengers of the Almighty. Their innocence, their quickness, their sweetness, and their beauty were so great.

They were the kindest, most pitying little things you ever saw. I told you I found them engaged one day carefully binding up the wounds of a poor crushed frog they had found in the lane,—little untaught Samaritans! They care-

fully carried it home, placed it where it would be comfortable and safe, and endeavoured to supply it with food. They did not succeed in curing it, I fear.

Once I found them crying over the woes of the ugliest dog you ever set your eyes upon, who was the contempt and aversion of the whole village,—a miserable, half-starved, worn-out cur. An unlucky boy had thrown a stone at it, and broken the animal's leg. Amy was crying bitterly; both children were endeavouring with all their little strength to help it along, that its leg might be set by Mamma Lewis.

For she was mamma to both.

Mrs. Lewis set the limb, with all the gravity and dexterity of an accomplished surgeon, and bound it up with a linen compress neatly and well, and then the little ones were content. Amy kissed the dog through her half-dried tears, and with a respect and gratitude lovely in so young a child, kissed that hand of

Mamma Lewis, too, which had set the leg so well.

I feel I shall weary you with my relations; but I find it hard to tear myself from the contemplation of so much innocent happiness; though, however, I promised to speak a little of Mrs. Grant, and having done so, will proceed with my story.

CHAPTER IX.

"You knew her window, that the jessamine
And honeysuckle hung with draperies rare,
By the brown sparrows on the garden trees
That hopp'd and twittered."

New Griselda—W. C. Bennett.

Holding little Amy by the hand, she, jumping for joy, and followed by Mrs. Lewis with her little son, I proceeded to make my first visit to Mrs. Grant.

Mrs. Grant was quite one of the aristocracy of the village. She was the widow of an officer —an officer, however, that had risen from the ranks — but she was considered as occupying the highest place in the humble society of which

she formed a part, and the consideration she met with, had given to her manners and appearance a dignity which others acquire in grand assemblies and in courts.

Her house, as I said before, stood somewhat apart from the village, in a little bosquet of trees. There were two or three giant elms upon the little property, and two or three magnificent old bushy hawthorns, which last, when the white May was out, were the admiration of everybody.

We entered the small domain by a neat green gate, which admitted us to what might be called the approach—for it was wide enough to allow a carriage to enter, when, by rare accident, a carriage wanted to do so—and it was often turned to use by Mrs. Grant's little cart, for she was, as I found afterwards, a small farmer as well as a small gentlewoman, enjoying a small pension, as a small officer's widow.

After going a few yards up the approach, a little turf path led us through a screen of laurels

into a garden in all the pride of early summer, and of those plants anciently the glory of gardens, now in general set aside—or treated with little of that minute attention which constituted them, as we may say, the triumphs of the floral art. I cannot quite abandon the hope of seeing this Dutch taste in gardening revived again, and that I may live to see tulips, ranunculuses, anemones, and auriculas, restored to their proper place in their own lovely sphere.

This small garden, framed in accurately cut laurel hedges, and running in a simple parallelogram to the road, from which it was separated by a little field, was laid out in the old-fashioned taste, a diminutive of the grand style which prevailed in France in the days of Louis Quinze, when it cannot be denied that, so far as a certain form of the beautiful went, nothing was left to be desired.

It was kept with the utmost neatness, and was intersected with narrow gravel walks, edged with trim box, and the centre walk wider, so as

comfortably to allow of three people walking abreast.

At this time of the year this garden was in its highest beauty.

There were bushes of honeysuckles covered with flowers perfuming the air. There were majestic crown imperials rising in all their dignity; scarlet and yellow turncap lilies bedropped with dew; the unrivalled day lily, large thick white and yellow stocks, as big as roses, and early roses themselves just peeping from their buds. These flowers shone gorgeously in the borders on each side of the walk, whilst the small beds were devoted to the choicer specimens—the tulips, ranunculuses, and anemones. You never saw such beds of flowers — you never did. Such flowers are to be seen nowhere now, except we find them depicted in all their pouting magnificence in old pictures, or upon old chintzes, or old china.

The flaunting tulip, that most proud and beautiful flower, which has served to illustrate

many a moral maxim, is now no more to be seen, except, perchance, under a screen in a nurseryman's show in the King's Road, mocking us with the vision of what form, and colour, and texture can be, as displayed under a shed of mats, and surrounded with all the disenchanting evidences of vegetable commerce. The full rose of the ranunculus bending its stem with its rich heaviness, the splendid anemone, with its countless tassel of small leaves enclosed in that finely-tinted cup, the hyacinths with their pyramids of bells—these things, once forming the pride, the love, the interest of many an innocent, secluded life, have vanished with the simplicity of antique manners. For aught I know, they may still be found in the magnificent parterres of the wealthy, though I do not recollect having seen them there; but where I miss them, is in the humble gardens of the village, or among the inhabitants of the small town, where the cultivation of these choice bulbs and roots was in itself a form of cultivation to the cultivators.

Mrs. Grant's house was a specimen, upon a small scale, of those black and white houses, with pointed gables, casement windows, and story overhanging story widening as they rise, which still remain scattered about England.

The one before us, though so small, was a very beautiful specimen of the style. It was adorned with cornices, and crosses, and rosettes, and scrolls, in the black wood and white plaster, and with a point elaborately carved at the summit of each gable. I am ignorant of the terms by which to describe this species of architecture, seen to such perfection at Rouen—but the effect is very rich and venerable. The front of this one looked to the garden. It consisted of only two gables, joined below in an acute angle; an old-fashioned porch was over the door, with low casement windows upon each side of it. Windows of the same description appeared above, and one adorned each of the gables, their frames somewhat richly carved, and there was a small centre one over the porch in which was a good

deal of coloured glass. A narrow border ran round the house, and various small flowering plants were to be seen trained against the walls.

It was rich—it was lowly—it was antique—it was grave—it was peaceful—it was enchanting!

The casement windows stood open. Bees, whose hives stood upon a bee-bench under a laburnum tree in full flower, were buzzing about, revelling in the rich affluence of sweets; busily creeping in and out of the pendant bells or blossoms, winging away their flight laden with their golden treasures. The sun shone bright and glad; little birds were peeping about from among the bushes, whilst a bullfinch in a bright brass cage hanging out of one of the open windows, was whistling away, with all the might of his little musical soul.

It was a miniature picture; but never was miniature more lovely.

The cheerful sound of a spinning-wheel was heard through one of the windows.

"That's grandmamma," said Amy. "Don't you see her?"

And without allowing me to linger in this delicious little garden, she dragged me forward to the porch, and entering a narrow lobby, opened a door leading into the pretty little apartment, in which, turning her wheel, the venerable old lady sat.

She appeared to be of very advanced age. Her hair, white as snow, was rolled over above her forehead, and her pale, delicate, wrinkled countenance was enclosed in a widow's cap—a widow's cap of forty years. She was dressed in a black dress of widow's silk, relieved by a good deal of white about the throat and bosom, and joining with the cap below the chin, so that nothing but the pure outline of the ancient face, and the white veiny, well-formed, but withered hands, issuing from the snow-white lawn at the wrist, were visible.

As she rose from her wheel to greet me, leaning upon a long ebony staff, headed with

white ivory, it was evident that her figure must once have been tall and magnificent. It was now bowed down with the weight of years; yet in a manner that told of former strength rather than of present infirmity—of the strength that had resisted time—reminding one of what was left, rather than of what had been taken away.

It was old age—but it was not the decay produced by the maladies incident to old age. No trembling of the limbs, no uncertain motion of the head, no querulous lip, no glazed eye. She stooped, like the strong man under a weight—so she bowed beneath the hand of time. Her lip was thin and wasted, but it was cheerful-tempered and sweet. Her eye had lost the bright flashes of its youthful glory, but it was piercing, steady, and bright. The majesty resulting from a long well-spent life was there—the hoary head was as a crown of glory.

She rose, as I said, and saluted me with dignity and benevolence mingled. Her years were her dignity. She looked upon me, a man

of thirty, with the benignity with which I might have regarded Amy. From the high tower of her great old age, she looked down upon the young man kindly.

It gave me quite a pleasant feeling of renewed youth to be regarded so; and I am sure I felt inclined to return her benignity with at least an equal portion of reverence.

Amy led me forward by the hand.

"Here's Mr. Vernon! Here's the gentleman, grandma', that's been so kind to Fabian and me."

"I am glad to see you, sir. It is very good of you to walk up to visit an old woman. I am glad to have the opportunity of thanking you for your kindness to my dear little Amy."

"Oh, please don't put it in that way; I love Amy for her own sake," I said, drawing her toward me; "to have been of the least use to her was the greatest pleasure in the world."

"Will you sit down, sir?" pointing to a chair

by the pleasant open window, through which the soft wind came blowing gently, bringing with it the sound of birds singing, and bees humming, and the sweet perfume of that flower garden spread as a richly painted tapestry before us.

And having seen me placed, she resumed her antique, tall-backed, almost grand-looking chair, in which seated, she looked like the Queen of Ages upon her throne.

"Amy, run and bring some strawberries and cream, and some seed-cake, and a bottle of currant wine.—It is hot to-day, though the wind is so fresh and pleasant. You will not refuse our rustic refreshment after your walk, I am sure, sir."

"I shall be delighted to be served by my little Amy. You remember Eve's feast in Paradise—it always set me longing."

"Sir, we are very much obliged to a great poet for the beautifying of those gifts, which are open to all, and which most of us, if we will, may enjoy. The spreading heavens, the fresh

sweet air, flowers, and trees, insects and birds, fruit, and green herbs."

"Ah, my dear madam, how many a denizen of the town vainly longs for such enjoyments."

"Too true.—But does he do all in his power to obtain them? I doubt it. I think very few have either a clear idea of what they wish, or a persevering resolution to obtain it. I hope and believe that even in great towns much might be done, and I cannot but hope that before long much *will* be done, to secure these first blessings of nature—these relics of paradise, if I may call them so—for every artisan, even to the humblest, who labours with his hands.

"The difficulty lies in this," I responded, "that people, losing the means of enjoying such things, are apt to lose their taste for the enjoyment itself. The commoner sort cease to care for these wholesome, natural pleasures, and betake themselves in their place to drunkenness and debauchery—those cheap indulgences of crowded towns."

"They ought not to be so crowded...But here you come, my litttle lass," as the door opened and Amy entered, carrying a porcelain basket garnished with fresh strawberry leaves and filled with strawberries. She was followed by a nice, clean, rosy girl, bearing a japanned waiter blazing with gaudy painted flowers, on which were plates and silver spoons—cream in a little embossed silver jug—a decanter filled with currant wine of the most delicate pink colour, grapes, &c.

"Set down your strawberries, Amy, and bring the small round table—place it between the gentleman and me."

"But where's your cake?"

"Oh, it's coming, grandmamma."

And then the handy little Phillis began to arrange the things upon the table, and when that was done she ran out and fetched a plate of tempting yellow slices of seed-cake, performing her little task so attentively, so carefully, so handily, yet her little face all the while so beam-

ing with hospitable pleasure, that it was a perfect picture. When all was arranged to her satisfaction she began to assist her grandmamma in doing the honours. She selected for me the finest strawberries, assisting me daintily to pull the stems off, handing the sugar, the cream, the cake, so attentively !—It was a fresh surprise to me, though I had known the child so long.

"Why, you are quite a woman, Amy," I cried. She glanced at her grandmamma with a little look of pride and pleasure, who simply said, turning to her—

"And now, Amy, my dear, the gentleman will take a glass of wine."

I did so. Execrable as made wines too often were in the day of their power, I would not refuse; but I found no reason to repent my complaisance.

"Now, Amy, help to take the things away, and then go and feed Bully; he has not had fresh seed or water to-day."

"What a nice child," I began, when she had

taken her departure. "A wonderfully clever child she is, indeed. I never saw such a sensible, prudent, amiable, little thing in my life. She is very remarkable."

"She is a little above the common standard, I believe, but I don't think she is more advanced than many other children of her age, who have the same advantages. You would be surprised to see, sir, how clever and dextrous the children of the poor become, merely from the necessity of putting their hands to things. My dear little Amy must learn early to be useful, for when I am gone the little thing will be *very* poor."

"Mrs. Lewis has told me how she was circumstanced, and that you were anxious to prepare her to take a place as a nursery governess when the time arrives that she must get her own living; but, thank God, there is every reason to hope that time will be far off. You have another good twenty years in you, Mrs. Grant."

She sighed, and she smiled gravely and gently, and shook her head.

"If it will only please Him to grant me eight years, so that I may see that child in her teens, It will be a great mercy. I have already passed the extreme boundary of ordinary human life—what remains will be as a miracle of His goodness."

The plan of making Amy commence life, if need were, as a nursery governess, seemed to me so sensible a one, that I wished to add my little contribution to the scheme by beginning to teach her a little French. I therefore offered my services, adding, "I could not do much, but a beginning is always a beginning. I think, when I go to London, I can find some little books which will help her on, and I shall be coming again next summer, perhaps, to visit my cousin Lady Vynour; and then we can get something more done. It is my maxim, that in things which are in themselves desirable,

ever so little is better than none, supposing more is not to be had."

Mrs. Grant received my offer with gratitude.

"Poor dear!" said the old lady, "I would have been glad to have commanded more of what are commonly called advantages for her . . . and yet I do not feel quite sure whether what she gets at the simple village-school — learns in the natural course of her rural life, and exercises in her attendance and care of me—is not the best education that she can receive for one under her circumstances. The commoner girls' schools are such places! and the higher ones are so expensive! And even in the best, among the best, there are such evils to be found, that I am told the majority of mothers refrain from sending their girls there."

"I hate girls' schools, myself," I cried; "not," correcting myself, "that I know much about them; but I have prejudices against them so strong, that I take them for instincts—and no one can help believing in his instincts."

"And yet, Lady Vynour went to school, I believe."

"So she certainly did, and no harm ever came of it, that I know of, except that she just left her constitution there. They overworked her, I imagine, in the preposterous manner schoolmistresses—I beg their pardon—I mean heads of seminaries—think it a matter of principle, or perhaps of interest, to overstrain young people—for the absurdity of parents in their requirements, as to what is to be learned and done in a given time, makes it a contest between schools which can effect most in that way. Nobody seems to think of the cost, of the strain and the wear—the suffering at the time, and what is a thousand million times worse, the permanent life-long injury which is too often, most often, I fear, the consequence. No, for the sake of all that is wise and good, don't send that nice, clever, vigorous little girl of yours to a school. If accomplishments are not to be had at a lower price, do without accom-

plishments. Let her be a healthy merry housemaid, rather than a sickly, miserable governess."

"Ah, sir, ambition. We all have it—it is an integral portion of every human heart, I fear. A domestic servant! Amy! I am afraid I could not bear that."

"I put the extreme case; there is no reason in the world why Amy should not be properly prepared at home for the place you propose her for. What she can get, let her get by all means—cultivate her mind as you are doing, cultivate her heart as you are doing, call forth and develope her natural powers — her good sense, activity, readiness, and quick perception, and accomplished or not, any wise woman would be anxious to have her about her children. Pooh! for accomplishments, the purse can always command *them*."

"Thank you, sir. What you are pleased to say is a great relief to me. I know that you have experience in—you know that world well —into which Amy must sometime or other enter,

if she is to maintain herself respectably when I am gone. It is a satisfaction to find that my own thoughts had led me to much the same conclusions. But I have been afraid—afraid in a point of so much importance, that I might be mistaken, and only yielding to prejudices and my own peculiar notions. I can scarcely be capable of judging justly of such matters, having lived in this secluded place for so great a part of my life. A little world of our own!—which, until the last few years, this village of Ashurst literally was."

"I will speak to Lady Vynour about Amy—she must have remarked the child—she will never lose sight of her."

"Alas, sir! Lady Vynour! Her glass will be run out before mine."

"You don't think so?"

"A good constitution is the seedling oak; sound at heart and slow to decay. A constitution weakened in its youth by too artificial a rearing, is as a delicate exotic plant, pushed forward in the hot-house to exquisite slenderness

and beauty; but the first adverse wind it meets with cuts it down. It fades, dies, and is seen no more."

Mrs. Grant did not, perhaps, work out her illustration remarkably well, but I understood what she meant.

"And Ellen—Lady Vynour is one of these hot-house plants?"

"Sir, in goodness, in loveliness, in all that can adorn a woman, Lady Vynour is without an equal. Is it not a sin and a shame that they could not make her this at school without undermining her health by ridiculous privations, which would better have become a convent of Carmelite nuns than a school for the education of English gentlemen's daughters—daughters, sir, who are intended for wives and mothers. To say nothing of tasks and intellectual exertions far beyond their strength, which bear down all the energies and free spirits of young girls by their absurd severity; there are all sorts of ill-judged regulations, as I understand, carried

out in such places, equally injurious to health and happiness. Think of Lady Vynour! For instance, that delicate young creature, accustomed to all the comforts of a rich and tender father's house, and the light privations of childhood, not being allowed a fire in her bed-room even in the depth of winter—being stinted in the very food vitally necessary to a growing girl; and at the same time obliged to forestall large portions of the sleep her weariness and her girlhood required, to get up these preposterous lessons—lessons upon things it matters not one silver penny whether a girl ever knows or not. And what, I would ask, is given in exchange for this useless erudition? Her youth, her prime, her health, her spirits, her energy, and happiness, perhaps, for life. Lady Vynour being so delicate and susceptible a creature, might suffer in proportion more than others; but it is the same in degree with all, and the fairest and most precious are those who can the least bear it."

The aged woman's face kindled up as she

spoke, a faint colour rose to her pale cheek, her dark eyes flashed.

"Is Ellen — is Lady Vynour so delicate, then?"

"A mere shadow—a constant sufferer—a martyr to the meanness and the folly of a Mrs. So-and-so—but an angel, one of the Almighty's suffering-taught angels."

"If that was Mrs. So-and-So's doing, there is something at least to be said on her side."

"No thanks to her," said the angry old lady, now thoroughly aroused. "The perfection was in the original type. Methinks little thanks is owing to Mrs. What-do-you-call-her for taking all the strength and vitality out of the fairest plant that ever blossomed to adorn God's garden on earth, so that the first frost will kill it."

"I wonder, seeing this, you could hesitate for a moment, as to whether you would send Amy to a school or not."

"Ah, sir! it is not a parallel case—Amy has to get her living. Do you think that if I were

rich and independent, I would hesitate for a moment? Do you think I would sacrifice my child to this grim phantom of useless learning? What was that horrid goddess, before whose altar the Spartans used to torture their children! This is a more odious, deformed, and preposterous worship. Why, I hear, that even in their mother's houses, children and young growing girls are shut up for hours and hours in little close rooms — learning, Heaven knows what!—learning, to hate to learn, mostly, I believe—and the sweet sky, and the fresh air, and the delicious liberty, and running, and jumping, and screaming, and all that develops the creature, and brings it out at last, all joy, and freshness, and truth, and power, is lost or sacrificed to this absurd ambition. Why, I have heard of a governess thinking herself ill-used!—ill-used, forsooth!—because a mother insisted on more relaxation, exercise, and healthful enjoyment for a delicate child than suited the governess's ideas. The child's acquirements

would not do credit to the governess,—save us all! Oh, the world is made for teachers and tyrants, not for children and people."

I could scarcely help smiling at the old lady's vehemence. She quickly perceived it, stopped instantly, sighed, sank back in her chair, and murmured,—"Impotent old age, impotent old age! garrulous and feeble. I beg your pardon, sir; Nestor used to bore the Greeks with his old world saws, which he thought wisdom. It has been the same ever since. Great age is tedious."

"You mistake me altogether. I did not think you tedious—far, far from that—Or your wisdom, old world. I assure you, that I, at least, heartily wish it could get listened to in the new world, for it is very much wanted."

She smiled benignly from the place where her head rested against her chair—she held out her wrinkled hand.

"You are good. To be kind to old age is yet more benevolent than to be tender to in-

fancy. Age wants it as much, but has far less power to win it. Though weak, we are apt to be violent; when once excited, our thoughts and words seem to run away with us. You are considerate enough to understand and excuse this. Do you love flowers? Do you like old-fashioned flowers?—such as ranunculuses, and hyacinths, tulips, and so forth?"

"I have quite a silly passion for them."

"Will you be so good as to call Amy?"

"Amy, gather that large basket full of the very finest of our flowers that you *can* find. There's a pleasure for you my little girl! for this once in your life you may go into the garden, take your scissors, and cut every one of the flowers that you think most beautiful....It's to make a large nosegay for this gentleman, and I dare say he will let you have one or two of the flowers for yourself. You will not refuse," she said, turning to me, as Amy, in ecstacies with the commission, left the room. "There never was living child who did not long

to crop every flower it admired. The desire to leave them on the stem is an affection of later growth. I am sure you will not refuse to let me indulge my little grandchild in her own way."

Nothing was to be said after that; and I only wish you could have seen the nosegay arranged in an ancient china blue and white vase that was placed upon Mrs. Lewis's table that day.

No old flower picture you ever saw exceeded it in profusion of beauty—but you have had description enough of flowers for one while, and I leave you to picture the nosegay for yourselves.

CHAPTER X.

"With noble thirst his bosom burns."

WHITEHEAD.

PAUL LEWIS TO LADY VYNOUR.

"I VENTURE to address Lady Vynour, knowing, by experience, the tenderness of her nature, and how ready she is to sympathise with woe, in any of the innumerable shapes of human suffering in which it can present itself to the sympathetic observer.

"The forms under which it presents itself in this vast city—this opulent, proud, magnificent metropolis—this emporium of the wealth and

luxury of the great world, are various as the many-coloured robe of the patriarch, and, like his fatal garment, only the signal of coming death. But it is not on account of the sorrows of enormous masses of my fellow-creatures, numerous as they be, that I am about to make an appeal to her heart.

"Sterne, in his 'Captive,' says, justly, that one individual instance brought before the imaginative eye, goes farther in exciting the heart's commiseration than millions of such instances of human oppression heaped together. And I am going to presume so far upon Lady Vynour's benignant temper as to lay before her, in some detail, that one form of human misery with which I have more particularly to do.

"Your ladyship has often, no doubt, had occasion to dwell with compassion upon the sufferings of the caged lark, fluttering and beating its small wings against the cruel wires of his cage—yet he drinks the fresh air of heaven, the bright sunshine gilds his little prison, he hears

his fellows in the field—he is a captive, but not in a dungeon—I speak of a caged lark in the country, but what a contrast is offered by the fate of the same little bird in town!

"Immured in the corner of some dark court or narrow street, surrounded with the grim and dreary twilight of a day, which the sun never ripens into *real* day—inhaling pestiferous smells, listening to harsh, discordant noises, the very spring of harmonious being poisoned at its source—can he sing?

"Plaintively he utters forth some feeble notes, but the spirit of song within is deadened,—it expires! and with it the poor flutterer droops, and fades, withers away in spirit, and dies!

"My lady, there are men—there are youths—scarcely yet to be classed with bearded men, at this very moment drooping, perishing, fading away in misery far exceeding that of the poor little lark.

"Like her they were created to soar aloft, spring upwards from the dewy grass, inhale the

pure air of the empyrean, and pour forth their heart in joyous song!....

"The glories of nature! the beaming sun! the azure sky, the fleecy cloud, the golden sunset, the wealth, and the beauty, and the perfume, and the harmony of the fair universe, are peculiarly their birthright! It is the element in which they were born to live—in which alone they *can* live.

"Others there are, and it is well, who, with coarser perceptions, and more grovelling aspirations, can be content, like the muckworm or the mole, to adhere to the base but to them profitable clay. Mammon is their God, Gain their life, Gold their joy. Let such pursue their path! Let such accumulate the hoarded treasures of the earth! but ah! wing not the lark—retrench not his pinions—force him not down to the darksome dust, where he can only pine and—silenced, the bright exhilaration of his heaven-mounting song—finally expire.

"Mr. Strickland is a wise and benevolent man,

no one can presume to deny that. To my brother and to me he has proved a great benefactor; he has educated us, and started us, as it is called, in the world.

"Exercising his fine penetration into the characters of men and the relation of things, he has placed my brother where his talents are duly exercised, where his merits are displayed and respected—in his element, in short—where he is happy and free.

"But can as much be said for myself? Was equal discrimination shown as regards him who pens these lines?—Equally fine perception of the true vocation, of the necessary adaptation of man to the circumstances, and of the circumstances to the man? ....

"I was born a poet.

"I am not ashamed to declare my conviction of it. I glory in the proud name. I glory in attaching myself, one additional hapless victim, to the noble array of martyrs in the cause of poesy!—For martyrs are we all! Blinded Homer!

blind, unhonoured Milton! Shakespeare! Dryden! Burns!—Glorious martyrs to the cause of beauty, harmony, and song! Martyrs all—for is not the poet by his very nature marked out to suffer? — formed as he is of a finer clay than that of the ruder elements about him. —Are not his imaginations more vast—his aspirations more grand—his sensibilities more acute?—alas! how morbidly acute to pleasure and to pain! What poets have suffered is written upon the scroll of time. One more inscribes his name, and adds to the sad, but precious list.—

"I wander from my purpose—but I would fain describe—I would feign awaken the fine sensibilities of your ladyship's kind heart to a sense of the miseries attendant upon certain situations!—I will proceed—

"There is a poet, then, with mind and heart high strung, with perceptions of beauty all alive —with appetite for the enjoyments of nature unlimited—a poet, I make bold to say, in every sense of the word!—And he!—He is, at this

very moment, pent up day after day in a large unwholesome shop, measuring by the yard tapes and linens, dowlas and baize, to any rascal customer who chooses to enter this murksome den of darkness, and demand his attention.

"No matter where his thoughts may have strayed, no matter how precious the combinations his intellect and imagination may at that moment be forming, he must leave and forget them all—to do what?

"Not to serve and suffer in some vast and glorious cause—the cause of mankind and his fellow creatures! Not to step forward the proclaimer of truth—fresh truths—maybe unpalatable truths—and perish in the attempt to make himself heard,—No sacrifice grand and high that ennobles at once and rewards the victim, is demanded!—

"No!

"What is he called upon to do?—

"That which the poorest humdrum clod that ever assumed for itself the title of man can

execute as well, or better, than he—Wield the cloth yard—make up the bill, listen to all the nonsensical prattle of the querulous or capricious customer—present his account, and with a false, deceitful smile of complacency upon his face settle it, and receive the amount!—

"The very cash he labours for being not his own—He toils only to add to the already hoarded heaps of his master—the capitalist his master! —and sighs as he asks, where is his own reward?

"I lose myself again in declamation!—but briefly—this life is insupportable to me. And I feel that it is to be endured no longer.—

"What was to be done?—

"I went down to see and consult my brother. What did I get for my pains?—words—words —vain words!

"My brother labours in his vocation and is content; he thinks, therefore, any man has but to labour in his vocation, and he will find content. He forgets the nature of vocation;—he

forgets the vital nature of that truth which lies at the very foundation of society—*Chacun selon la capacité!* He forgets that capacities differ. That Alexander would have been miserable as the teacher of the school, though Dionysius might wield the rod with satisfaction—that some are made for toil of the hands—some for labour of the brain—some to adorn society—some merely to find bread for it!—some to instruct and exalt the moral perceptions of their fellow men. . . That we are happy where we like to be—that we like to be where we are fitted to be!—and that, with that one condition, man is noble and free; without it, a lash-driven slave!

"All I got from Walter in return for my objurations, was an exhortation to return to this detested shop and be content.

"'He laughs at scars that never felt a wound,' &c. &c.

"It is easy for the well-satisfied man to preach contentment to the wretch who is, and cannot help being, miserable! Miserable! be-

cause he is stretched upon the rack of repugnance, aversion, abhorrence of the task he has daily and hourly, without let or change, to perform. It is a rack! the word is not too strong —The tortures and the struggles I endure, between my wish not to prove ungrateful to Mr. Strickland, my wish to conform to the advice of my brother, and the furious efforts of my nature to break these accursed fetters and be free, might form a picture for one of the circles in the terrific hell of Dante.

"Let me take breath—let me cool, and speak coolly. The subject overpowers me—but I will be calm.

"After viewing the matter in all its lights, I address myself, as my last resource, my lady, to you.

"You are a woman, and therefore sympathising and kind. You are a gentlewoman, and therefore refined, and a judge of the wretchedness that waits on refinement out of place. You are powerful, for the mild splendour of your

radiance beams among the sons and daughters of that aristocracy to which, as to the starry host existing in a separate sphere, we are taught reverently to look up! But, and if we look up. Is it not the duty on their side to look down?

"Exempted from the bitter, irritating evils of which I complain, ought they to smile in derision at woes they have never experienced? or should not they rather compassionate, assist, and strive to rescue!

"Your ladyship is all-powerful with Mr. Strickland—the ruler of my humble destiny.

"Will you speak a word for me?

"Will you make him understand—for it is vain for me to attempt it—the incongruity of the life to which he has assigned me? Will you entreat him for once to relax the stern rule which he has imposed upon himself—to regard a suffering fellow-creature, and condescend to reconsider his award—condescend to reflect whether, in condemning a man like me to the grind-

stone—my nose bowed down to labour at it like some senseless brute—he is doing well.—Whether it would not be better, kinder, worthier, more economic even, as regards the general interests of the race to which we both belong, that some more fitting task should be allotted to me?

"Might I distantly hint at a pair of colours?

"I feel the spirit of a man—of a brave—I will not say a great man, stirring within me! Let me serve my country!

"I ask no more.

"Take me but from this base counter—and let me die!—Only let me yield my latest breath, facing the foes of Albion in the field, and I ask no more!—So will I surrender up my being, content and grateful.

"Better die ten thousand deaths than live!

"Allow me to whisper one more argument for your ladyship's private ear, and I have done.

"Temptations beset me on every side—I shall yield at last! I feel my mortal strength give way—I feel myself generally sinking—

sinking into the vortex of sorrow and sin ! where I shall inevitably be lost, unless a benevolent hand is extended to extricate me."

* * * * *

"Ha, ha, ha ! ho, ho, ho ! ha, ha, ha ! A pair of colours for a crop-winged lark sinking in the vortex of temptation ! Ha, ha, ha ! ho, ho, ho ! A pair of colours—a pair of colours ! Ha, ha, ha ! ho, ho, ho !" cried Mr. Strickland, as he fell back in his chair and wiped his eyes. "Why it's perfectly delicious—Ha, ha, ha ! Why, my dear child, how can I thank you enough for letting me see this letter ? Ha, ha, ha ! I shall die of it—I shall die of it—it's delicious —A pair of colours !—Dear child, you have a design upon my life—I shall die of it—Ho, ho, ho, ho !"

"But, my dear uncle——"

"Nay, if the letter has melted your soft heart, it will be too good—ha, ha ! Did'st ever see Phœbus kiss a dish of butter ?—Nay, nay, don't

put a grave face upon it, or I shall really expire! Why, my dear, sweet, tender, delicious simpleton, are you really taken in with this lamentable stuff? Ha, ha! ho, ho, ho! You don't—you can't say so."

"But, my dear uncle——"

"I protest you are—I really protest you are actually touched by this deplorable effusion. You are! Don't deny it!...Dear, sweet child! —you adorable goose! Ellen! why, I really believe you are quite moved—Oh dear me! it's too good. What shall I do with myself?"

"Do with yourself, dear uncle?" said Ellen, trying vainly to hide a smile; "why, do as a great orb like you ought to do—look down from your sphere upon an unhappy satellite, and put yourself, if you can, into the place of this aspiring young poet, measuring dowlas in Mr. Howish's dark shop."

"And what else is he good for, I'd be glad to know?" starting up and his face kindling. "What better than that is the young scapegrace

good for, I'd be glad to know? Measuring dowlas in a shop! I'm ashamed of you, Ellen. Why, did not your grandfather stand behind a counter in his youth, measuring dowlas, as you call it—and what a man *he* became! A young rascal! Not good enough for *him!*—well, then—he's of an aspiring nature...Let him go and climb chimneys."

"I don't mean, indeed, dearest uncle—I should be deeply ashamed of myself if I could mean anything like that!—If I could be so absurd, so ridiculous, so silly, as to look down upon any honest calling."

"I'd not have you dare do it before me, if you did. In this country the greatest men among us have risen from what you are pleased to name honest callings. It's the glory of the land—it's the glory of the country! We pick up all our great men wheresoever we find them; no place is too low to stoop to, if so be we pick up a first-rate man. And we do find 'em all, and we have 'em all, and we use 'em all, too

Madam Ellen, every man jack of em! I don't believe there's one single first-rate in this kingdom that don't make his way and get to the top of the tree, and serve his country as a first-rate alone *can* do. But mind, Madam E., there are no such numbers of first-rates to be found. First-rates ain't started out of every bush, I can tell you!—but as for whipper-snapper pretenders, with a second-rate talent like this, why, you may have them by bushels, by quarters, by loads. They swarm like locusts—they are the *pests* of society—because they have not even sense enough to measure their own strength, to know their own place, and labour honourably in their proper vocation."

"But, uncle, you yourself own that even *they* are something above the common run."

"The more the pity—the more the mischief—if they are—because they never know *how* much or rather how little they are above it—that's what it is. A man can string a few doggerel rhymes together, or sing-song verses, if you

will have it, and people like you call it poetry! Every dunce writes poetry of a sort now, or he can draw a man driving a cart, or a great big goddess as long as my arm, or write a trashy novel, or something or other—do anything in short but what is useful—and then, forsooth! his talents are so promising! He's not to get his bread like other honest folk, in an honest way, by being of some use! But take this along with you, my dear," lowering his tone and sitting down by her again—"Men won't pay their money for what does them no manner of good. They may give a little in charity to a poor starving pretence of an artist, but they won't *buy*—they don't want these things, and they won't *buy*—they won't go on *buying*—they won't give good useful bread and cheese for what's of no value to them or anybody!—Half and half art!—half and half literature! If a man wants to get a living, I tell you, he must furnish men with what is useful or pleasant—what they want, in short, or what they covet,

not with stuff everybody, if they would own the truth, loathes! If they *have* talents—I hate the very word—why, their talents may amuse their leisure! So let this young jackanapes, when he's done measuring his dowlas, keep himself out of temptation, and recreate his spirit with courting the muse!—Writing songs like Burns! Ha, ha, ha!—I really shall die of it, if you look so woe-begone and compassionate, Ellen."

"But, my dearest uncle, just listen for one moment. This is an individual case. What have we to do with what other men will do—buy or not buy—value or not value?—Here is a poor wretch of a boy, panting for fresh air in a close London shop—sickening of an employment which affords not the slightest room for exercising his real powers. The good Samaritan, uncle!...Our neighbour! Every one is our neighbour who comes in our way—this poor young man is come in yours."

"That he has—that he has—and be hanged

to him! and I'd have him get out of it as fast as he can. A young scoundrel! Have I not done enough?—Have I not saved him from the Union—for there he must have gone if I had not stepped in...given him a good education—no, not given, offered!—for he would not take it—put him apprentice to the most respectable man in London, at a place where body and soul are both looked to, as if all these young fellows were that good man's own children!...And he's to come in my way with a 'Don't like it' (mimicking), and 'a pair of colours'—and 'he'll fall into temptation.' I wish he may—I wish to goodness he may, and be sent to Clerkenwell and a taste of hard labour—or a good flogging would be better still!...Good Samaritan! I'm ashamed you can run on so, Ellen! There's a difference between the man you *find* in your way, and the man that *thrusts* himself into your way, I should think."

"But they may both be objects of pity."

"Ellen, Ellen!—don't, don't. You're a clever girl, and you're a good girl—never was a better ...but beware—we may be too soft, I had almost said *too* good. Look the matter in the face. Is there anything about this young man —ask yourself the question calmly—that you should endeavour to persuade me for his sake to break a rule, which I hold, and I believe you think justly, to be essential to my effecting any valuable good—essential to my purpose of raising hardworking, determined, free, and high-spirited men, in place of a set of weak, sickly dependents upon my goodness and generosity.—My generosity, forsooth! A pack of flatterers and bloodsuckers! murmurers and idlers!"

"Ah, dear uncle, forgive me!"

"I have explained to you," he continued with considerable feeling in his tone, "how great is the difficulty for a wealthy man like me to do good in the way I desire, without creating an evil far greater than the highest benefits I can confer,—that of giving rise to a spirit of de-

pendence. It lies dormant in us all. We *will* not work, and bear, and strive, and battle as we ought to do — as it becomes a man to do—if we are not forced to depend upon our own exertions. If we can get another to do for us what we none of us like to do for ourselves,—if, when we fail through indolence, want of virtue or want of skill, there is one to fall back upon—we never shall be laborious—what I call being laborious—or virtuous, orderly, and self-denying—or skilful to the extent of our capacity...and therefore, Ellen, you know you approved my rule. Once fairly started, nothing more, under any circumstance whatsoever, was to be expected from me. This rule must be like the rule of the Medes and Persians, never to be broken, or it is in its very nature worthless. Once grant that circumstances might plead for an exemption, and every lad among them all would have the pretence of a circumstance to offer,—not perhaps enough to move me, but enough to weaken him. No, Ellen; it goes

hard with me now and then to adhere to my plan, but I have done it, and, please God, will continue to do so; and I am not going to break it the first time for such a whining, good-for-nothing, hop-o'-my-thumb ballad-monger as this."

"My dear uncle, I have not a word more to say. I beg your pardon; I was very weak and foolish indeed. A thousand times before you have condescended to explain to me the reasons for this rigid rule of action. I acknowledge the justice of it. I beg your pardon, indeed I do."

"My dear child!" kissing her—"that is more than I have a right to ask. I am not always sure that I am right myself—but in this case, I have not a shadow of a doubt. To tell the truth, my dear, this gentleman was always a selfish, idle, good-for-nothing fellow—with a spice of talent about him—perhaps—a pretty good spice—just enough to pervert his own understanding, and to excuse and palliate to

himself, conduct very discouraging to all who meant him well. He never would work—he never would apply. I intended at first to start him in some of the higher grades of life, such as require a learned education—but he never would learn. He was fit for nothing when his education came to an end—the result was a mere shallow smattering of shreds and bits of knowledge, which any ingenious mind can pick up without labour; but which, like other cheap things, wont stand the test when they are brought to it. He was totally incapable of making his way in any profession that requires perseverance and self-devotion. He was only fit for such work as *must* be done, and what it required no particular mental effort to do. As a lad behind the counter I knew he could get a decent living, and could not much hurt anybody by his scrambling habits of mind. I got him a place where everything good lay before him; even self-education, if he chose it. That good man, Howish, furnishes his dependents with the

means even for *that*, if they will make use of them. But no, thank you—my young gentleman likes better to cultivate his fine taste by frequenting theatres, than by solid reading and attending lectures at the Pantechnicon."

There was silence for some time.

Before, however, finally dropping the subject, Mr. Strickland took it up once more.

"The only thing that vexes me in all this, and to which I look with some anxiety, is Walter. I'm afraid for Walter.—I have my fears that this young rapscallion will go a begging to Walter, and rob him of his honest gains."

"Oh! I hope not—Paul cannot be so bad as that—he'd be too much ashamed surely to do that."

"My dear child, a conceited puppy like Master Paul is ashamed of nothing, and a self-interested reasoner like him finds reason to justify anything. Poor Walter! But it can't

be helped. We are all exposed to the curse of troublesome relations—and who so much as I, with my plaguing Ellen! Walter must do like me—and take care of himself."

CHAPTER XI.

"'Twas a sweet smile—so full of human love
Of gentle tenderness and kindly heart . . . .
It doubly blessed her—"

New Griselda—W. C. BENNETT.

THE window stood open, and let in the soft cool air of a fine autumn evening; but there was, nevertheless, a small fire in the bright grate, and the shining copper tea-kettle was humming and singing his pleasant household psalm by its side.

A round table in the centre of the little sitting-room was set out for tea. The tea-things of china, with the least and cheapest of gold edges, were ready, and there was a china basket of

autumn fruit, in the centre, a present from the Hall, plums and some peaches, adorned with leaves and flowers.

Two little children were already seated at the table, rocking about in their chairs, in that indescribable way in which children express high delight, exchanging happy glances, and little sly jokes with each other; and there was the nice young mother, stepping briskly up and down, now in the surgery—now into the kitchen to overlook Biddy's proceedings — and at times opening the window to listen whether Nell's sober trot might be heard advancing up the road.

"Here he comes at last," she cried; and the children with a scream of delight prepared to scramble down from their chairs.

"Now keep still, good children; you know papa comes in so tired. Wait till he has been upstairs and made himself comfortable, and then Amy shall run and open the door for him, and Faby shall lead him to his chair."

His arm-chair, which was duly set by the side

of the table, turned towards the fire, and yet commanding a view of the window, so as to unite all pleasures and comforts at once.

The step of Nell entering the stable-yard, and of the old man who officiated as groom and gardener, was heard, as also that of the young man briskly entering the house, and the wife left the room in a moment.

Soon cheerful voices were heard over-head, and steps, passing to and fro, and the young surgeon, having made his ablutions, and changed his dress, came down fresh, cheerful, and happy, with a capital appetite to enjoy his tea. He entered the little parlour followed by his pretty wife, and the little children were presently clinging to his knees and kissing his hands, and leading him forward to his arm-chair, into which he sank with a sigh of intense enjoyment, his handsome face bright with health, cheerful with the sense of duty well performed, and his eyes beaming with love and good-will.

Then instantly the busy Kate vanished and

presently reappeared, bringing up a dish of delicious hot muffins, which she set before her husband.

And first of all the master, the loved lord and master, must be served, and then the children in their turn must have their share, and tea was poured out, and the happy little feast went prosperously on.

They chatted and they laughed; and Walter told of what he had been doing, and the children had their little history of adventures among the autumn woods to relate, and Kate had a little gossip of the village in store, and so they laughed and they chatted, and Walter stretched himself all along in that comfortable arm-chair of his, and enjoyed the fire, and his tea, and said everything was so good, it was quite dangerous to his morals—and that he should become a perfect epicure, in spite of Abernethy and all his dictums. At last tea was over, and things cleared away; and then Amy went home, and Fabian to his bed; and Walter, with an air of inex-

pressible content and satisfaction, leaned his head against the back of his arm-chair, and watched his wife, who finished putting things to rights, and then took her work and a low stool, and sat down by her husband's knee.

Fondly he laid his hand upon that dear head of bright hair, now bent a little downwards—industrious housewife! over her work.

"My best, dearest, sweetest Kate!" whispered he.

Her face spoke that which swells in a woman's heart, when she knows and feels that her husband loves her and values her, and that she makes him happy.

These were a few moments of silent, exquisite, ineffable bliss on both sides.

By and by they began to chat again, and Walter said, "No letter for me, I suppose?"

"Oh, dear, yes. I forgot. There is one for you, but I don't know the handwriting."

"No more do I," as she handed it to him.

He broke the seal and looked at the signature.

"Gilbert! Gilbert! what? Gilbert Howish!"

And he turned pale.

"What can Mr. Howish have to write to me about?"

She looked up anxiously, as he with a troubled brow turned a little to the light, and began perusing the letter.

It ran thus:—

MR. HOWISH TO MR. LEWIS.

"SIR,

"I am sorry to be under the necessity of informing you that Tuesday last—being the day before yesterday—your brother disappeared and has not been heard of since. As he has ventured, more times than I like to name, to stay out all night without asking my permission, but has usually resumed his place in tolerable time on the subsequent morning, I was not at first under any great uneasiness upon his account, though I confess to feeling considerable displeasure at his conduct; but as now eight-and-forty

hours have elapsed, and no tidings of him been heard, I think it proper to make you acquainted with what has happened.

"I have suspected for some time that your brother's intention has been to tire my patience out, provoke me to dismiss him, and so make the rupture of the agreement rest with myself; but this, for many reasons, I have resolved not to do. It would not suit me to let young men find, that when they are weary of their engagement, or were tempted by what they think would be higher remuneration in another place, thus to escape the penalty of the bond they have entered into with me before they were admitted to a place in my concern. The bond is exacted in order to give me security, that when I have taken pains to make good servants, I shall not be outbid for them by competitors in trade who may not be inclined to take the trouble I do about my young men when first they enter my service, yet are glad enough to profit by the habits of order and good conduct, I am proud to say, they

mostly acquire with me. Upon this account, and being at the head of so large a number of persons, exact discipline is indispensable. I, therefore, very unwillingly, give you this trouble, to inform you, that in spite of the vexation and worry Paul Lewis's conduct has occasioned me, I intend to hold him to his agreement; and, if I can catch him, shall insist upon his returning to his duty, or shall pursue him for the amount of the forfeiture; and if he is cast into prison, and has to come out again through the Insolvent Court, all I can say is, that it will not be done through harshness or ill-will upon my part, but through the necessity under which I lie, to make an example; and to show—that, though I hope I can be as indulgent to the follies of youth as any man, yet that I know when to be firm, and that I will punish ill-conduct as well as encourage good behaviour. If your professional duties would admit of it, I think it would be advisable that you should come up to town to see about this unpleasant business yourself.

"I have ordered your brother's boxes to be searched. Everything of value it appears has been taken away. He had very good, not to say expensive clothes, and various trinkets in the way of studs, rings, and other foolish pieces of extravagance, but all have disappeared. I am afraid by this that he is gone upon some scheme of his own, with the intention of never returning, and that we may hear no more of him.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"GILBERT HOWISH."

The little dream of happiness was at an end.

Dark threatening visions of coming evil succeeded: like gloomy spectres floating in the horizon.

Walter gave the letter to his wife, and covered his face with his hand.

Kate's face was soon burning with indignation, and her heart swelled with contempt and anger, as she read the letter. Twice she

went through it without speaking. Good woman! she did violence by herself to keep silence till her rage had a little subsided; she would not pain Walter by telling him all she thought of his brother.

"Never did I imagine it would come to this," poor Walter at last said.

She did not answer, as she justly might have done, "It is no more than I all along expected." Good wife! she thrust down the rising words, and only pressed her husband's hand.

"What must be done?"

"I think you must go up to London, if you can contrive it. That seems only a proper mark of attention to Mr. Howish's wishes."

There was a pause, which Walter at last broke, by saying, with a sigh—

"Well, dear, what we talked of as possible some little time ago, is come to pass. I thought I had persuaded him to be quiet, but you see it was only delaying the evil. I had better, per-

haps, have let him taken his own way at once. It would have spared this disgrace, at least."

"No, dearest Walter, you did right. Don't regret what you did and said. It was right, if possible, to persuade him to be quiet and stick to his place; and as to the forfeiture, we can pay it as well now as then."

"You do not go back from that intention," he said, taking up her hand and kissing it, with respect.

"You thought it due to your own and his honour; that is enough. But perhaps he may yet return."

"I am impatient to get to town, but I cannot possibly go up to-morrow. There is this frightful accident of poor Thomas Grimes's. It is absolutely necessary that I should not leave him till things look better than they do at present. In a couple of days, or so, the matter will be decided. I ought not—nay, I will not leave him till then."

"This is unlucky, but there is no help for it. Duty must be done."

It was nearly a week before Walter was set at liberty, and able to take a couple of days' absence and go up to London. When he arrived there, it was too late. The die was cast.

Paul had been discovered, dressed in his best suit, doing the genteel critic at a low, immoral theatre, among a party of young men still more worthless and a good deal more clever than himself; but he was a new acquisition, and was hailed by them all with one voice, and received with the honours due to genius—which high gift was considered by every member of this distinguished company as his own peculiar and indisputable attribute. Men they were, every one of them—if their own word was to be taken for it—men of the highest intellectual rank, though an unjust and partial world chose to deny them those distinctions which it reserved for the dolts and dunces of the aristocracy, or the cringing dependants upon wealth or power.

Lofty spirits were they, looking down with scorn from the high altitudes of mental superiority upon the base and venal throng, incapable of estimating their claims, or acknowledging their pretensions. Leaders of the age,—in advance of their generation, and therefore, of course, misunderstood and misprized, were they all! There they might be seen, seated in a side box at this most low and vicious little theatre, dressed in the true snob-dandy style — and in somewhat American attitudes; smoking cigars, sipping brandy and water between the acts, noisily applauding the principal actress, and the low and scandalous jokes of the buffoon; or hissing and cat-calling when anything was uttered or done which offended their taste, or called down their lofty displeasure.

A policeman had been put upon the scent; he had entered the theatre in plain clothes; descried his man, and civilly walked our friend Paul away to prison.

Here our young gentleman was left to his own

reflections; he found them sufficiently disagreeable.

Caught he was in a trap.

Why had he been such a fool as to dawdle in town, instead of making at once, as he had intended, for Paris? Paris was the only place for him. Ah! why had he suffered himself to be over-persuaded? Why was he not at this very instant dancing at the *bal masqué* at Paris, instead of where he was? He could have bitten his finger-ends off, instead of the poor nails which he gnawed at unceasingly, as he there sat ruminating upon his fate.

Not ruminating in any profitable sense, be it understood; only meditating how he might best get out of this scrape, and slip through the intolerable shackles imposed by an "infamous and tyrannical state of things."

Return to Mr. Howish's shop! that was the obvious alternative which first presented itself, but that *coute, qui coute*, he was resolved not to do. Pay his forfeit of two hundred pounds!

that, alas! unless he submitted, he found, too truly, that he should be forced to do! Oh, fool! fool! fool! He could have torn his hair at the thought. If he had but gone across the water, as he fully intended to have done, two nights ago; but it was no use going mad about it. Caught he was in the rat-trap, and to get out he must part with some of his skin.

But how to proceed? Why, find the two hundred pounds in the first place, and be quits with that odious old yard of tape—Howish. Easily said, but where was he to find the money?

He had tried Mr. Strickland. Nothing was to be got in that quarter. Mr. Strickland might affect to be a liberal—sprung from the people, and a friend of the people; but when it came to an assertion of their rights—the right every man has to bread—to education—to the means of living—there was not an aristocrat among them all who had more fine reasons to choke a gaping throat withal, than this same Strickland. It was an infamous shame to have given a man

the education he, Paul, had received—awaken the flame of a just ambition in his breast, and then refuse to assist in satisfying it. Better, a thousand times better, have left him to the tender mercies of the Union at first. But it was no use complaining.

There was no one on earth to look to but Walter. Well, then, it must be Walter.

He was sorry, but Walter it must be.

Indeed, Walter might partly take the blame upon himself. He was the elder brother by two or three years. Why had he not interfered at the right time? He ought to have been aware how ill he, Paul, was fitted for the place they had put him into; and it was too bad to suffer him to be bound by this infamous and unjust forfeiture, when he was too young to know what he was about. But as Walter had brought it upon himself, he must stand to the consequences.

Yes, that was it; he must get Walter to advance the money and set him at liberty—for set at liberty he would be. His present life was

insufferable. Supposing he were persuaded to try it again; why, it would only be to heap fresh difficulties upon himself. Something else he must and would do. Go into the Guards, perhaps? Mr. Strickland would not hear of buying him a pair of colours, but men had risen to glory from the ranks. The common men in the Guards dressed well—they did not seem to have much to do—he should see the world, learn something of life, and have leisure to finish his tragedy.

CHAPTER XII.

"Amazement seiz'd the circling crowd,
The youths with emulation glow'd;
The idiot wonder they express'd,
Was praise and transport to his breast."

WHITEHEAD.

In a few days Walter arrived in town, and hastened to visit his brother in prison.

He found him not in the least dejected with what had occurred, and very far, indeed, from being ashamed of what he had done. He attributed his conduct to the uncontrollable force of a character too generous to submit to slavery —and to powers of mind possessing elastic force sufficient to burst through the fetters of circum-

stance, however stringent. He unblushingly proposed to his brother to pay the forfeiture for him, Paul giving him a bond for the money, with promise to pay so soon as his tragedy should come out—a drama which Whalley, and Gothing, and Jobleham, and Dick Flyn—editor of the *Sun in the East*, (this last name pronounced with an air of dignity)—agreed would be certain to command success, and secure a run—not recently paralleled in the dramatic world.

"If you would but once get me out of this, Walter, you should see. I should not prove myself unworthy of the brother who had taken me by the hand. As for present subsistence, the pen, I know by the experience of many valuable men among my friends, is a precarious dependence for a beginner! but I shall soar high. I am of the eaglet race, and dare to look full at the sun; besides, something within me recoils at the idea of degrading my muse into a hireling for mere bread. Fame is what I seek—a lofty fame—and those

rewards which she abundantly showers upon her favourites, from her cornucopia of gold! None of your ten-pence a sheet for me."

Walter sat considering.

"It would be a great deal better—I can only repeat what I said to you at Ashurst—it would be much better to remain quietly with Mr. Howish till your time is up. You have a liberal salary—you have leisure in the evenings, as he always shuts up early, and can then cultivate your muse. You will thus have time to ripen your thoughts, to strengthen your efforts, and may produce something really good by and by. But till that something is actually produced, it is impossible to judge what course it will be best for you to decide upon."

"I won't march through Shrewsbury, that's flat," was the young man's reply.

"Won't march through Shrewsbury!—Who wants you to march through Shrewsbury? Paul, I shall have to shave and clap a blister on your head."

"The shrewdest of men wouldn't march through Shrewsbury with a scarecrow company that would disgrace him—though King or Kaiser commanded—and I won't return to stand behind a counter, crest-fallen and defeated, among a pack of insolent, vulgar, sneering rascals, though all the powers in England commanded it. Falstaff knew the strength of obstinacy, and so do I—'I won't march through Shrewsbury, that's flat.'"

Paul's last observation is but too true a one.

Obstinacy *is* a terrible power in wrong. It is the impregnable stronghold of the wrong-doer. Walter, at least, found himself no match for it.

His brother's resolution was immovable, and what was to be done. Leave him in prison, and to be disgracefully released by taking the benefit of the insolvent act? He could not bear to think of it. But Paul was indifferent to such considerations; he persisted in saying that return to the shop he would not—that pay he could not, unless upon the plan he had suggested,

except by taking the benefit of the Act, about which he, for one, had no scruples of delicacy. He, for one, saw no disgrace, he said, in taking advantage of one of the few arrangements by which society endeavoured to compensate to her suffering members for the countless wrongs she inflicted.

Mr. Howish would not abandon his claim, though he cordially advised Walter not to think of satisfying it in a manner so hazardous to himself. He persisted in affirming that the best thing to be done would be to let the young gentleman finish his tragedy quietly in prison—surrender his fine clothes, his studs, and his rings, and come out at last a little humbler and wiser than he went in.

But even the shadow of disgrace was insupportable to Walter; and, moreover, he thought it scarcely just to Mr. Howish to withhold his assistance. Paul, as he firmly believed, would, some time or other, be able to redeem his bond; for Walter had a high opinion of his brother's

abilities—so this matter ended by his advancing the money, and Paul coming out triumphant. I made use of the word bond—but, in fact, no such document as a legal bond passed between the two brothers. Paul gave his word of honour, and a note of the transaction as he called it, and then walked away whistling some popular song of the season.

His next step was to enlist in the Guards, for bread he had not to eat, and as yet "rascal publishers," as he styled them, found it worth their while only to offer a very scanty remuneration for his invaluable lucubrations. He fancied he should not have much to do in the Guards, but to strut about and wear a fine coat; and "it was a gentleman's profession even in the ranks"—though a man *was* paid by infamous despots, who conspired with a corrupt parliament to pillage the people.

But the Guards were, upon trial, found as little to the taste of Mr. Paul Lewis as any other calling where duty was to be done. Doing

his duty was the prime difficulty with our hero —a difficulty that cruelly met and obstructed him whichever way he turned.

The excellent discipline of the Guards was a yoke insupportable to so free and mounting a spirit—"a chartered libertine," as he loved to fancy and call himself. In brief, after contracting debts upon every side where it was possible to obtain credit, for things which he declared it was absolutely impossible to do without, though an execrable and niggardly government starved its soldiers with such abominably contemptible pay—after contracting debts, as I said, for all sorts of things, useful and useless, good for him or bad for him, as the case might be, one fine night our young gentleman deserted; and by the indulgence of one of the officers, an intimate acquaintance of the wandering pedestrian who relates this story, Walter was allowed to buy him out.

This indulgence was granted merely through regard to Walter, whose conduct continued

to be beyond praise, and who was perfectly heartbroken at the idea of the punishment to which his brother had rendered himself amenable.

In one thing only did Paul not prove a disappointment. When he was absolutely obliged to do it for bread—he took, though most reluctantly, to labouring regularly with his pen.

Labouring with his pen—labouring with assiduity, perseverance, and pains, so as to produce and perfect what publishers were willing to buy, he found to be a very different sort of business from flinging down on paper a few wild lines, or incoherent tragic scenes, just as the humour prompted—snatches to be read to, and applauded by, the members of a small coterie, who proceeded a good deal upon the maxim "laud me, and I'll do as much for you." But, when he was actually forced, by necessity, to work, he worked well enough—His abilities were unquestionably above, rather than below the common

standard, and so by hook or by crook he pocketted a good deal of money—or rather, never *pocketted* it, but spent it from hand to mouth just as it came in.—Mr. Paul was thus enabled to wear silk-lined coats and embroidered waistcoats again, and indulge to the full in his passion for studs, and all the vulgar finery in which his soul delighted.

To his credit, however, be it spoken—for greatly to his credit he thought it—far from conducting himself according to the usual fashion of successful men—and retiring from the great struggle in his country's cause, snoring—upon the bench from which he used to declaim, no longer a generous patriot, but a vile conservative...Paul continued to be first and foremost in clubs or public meetings of young men much of his own calibre, whose proceedings were stigmatised as seditious by the world in general, though they claimed for themselves the high distinction of being the only true friends of freedom, progress, and social happiness.

In assemblies, such as these, Paul was in all his glory. There he harangued, and there he imbibed the delicious intoxication of popular applause, as he ministered to his own pride, self-conceit, and self-delusion, as well as to those of his auditors.—There he might be heard with loud voice and vehement gesticulation—magnifying himself, his opinions, his audience, in comparison with the stupid dotards, the titled simpletons, the men alike characterised by insane audacity and contemptible blindness then in power. "Old women," as it is the fashion among such rare spirits to style them, who had handled the ribbons of the old coach so long that they thought none but themselves capable of guiding it; but who would find, when too late, how impotent their decrepid hands to curb the wild and generous energy of the panting steeds they pretended to restrain, &c., &c., &c.

And so I hope you are all pleased with the poetical justice which has elevated so much

energy of character and a genius so intuitive, to the high social pinnacle upon which now sits the much-deserving Paul.

END OF VOL. I.

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